

School leaders' perceptions of promoting relational well-being in a secondary school community.

Judith de Kok

20543719

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Supervisor: Dr. A.E. Kitching

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ABSTRACT

Globally there seems to be an increase in psychosocial problems in school communities. This tendency can largely be contributed to the increasing complexity of modern society.

Research studies indicate that for an organisation like a school to survive and improve the wellbeing of its members, it should become more flexible and adjustable to all sociological changes. In this study, it is reasoned that the complexity of human behaviour as well as the complex nature of a school community are not always fully realised. Leadership is thus not always able to make adjustments to enable the school to adjust to an ever-changing complex modern society.

Internationally, most governments address this problem by the implementation of programmes and policies that acknowledge the necessity to view a school community as being part of broader eco-systems. The introduction of whole-school approaches in schools addresses this interaction and the dependency between systems. The reasoning is that change is more likely to occur when the whole community shares a collective vision about their plans, aspirations, and goals. Despite policies that support multi-dimensional interactive approaches, it is unfortunately plagued by systemic problems due to a lack to fully accommodate an understanding of complexity of human behaviour and systems. Although the holistic and collective principles are implicated in policies, the importance of the dynamic nature of relationships does not always receive the necessary attention.

This purpose of this study is to focus on the potential of dynamic relationships in order to create a more humanised school community by utilizing dynamic interactive relational processes in the promotion of relational wellbeing. The emphasis is therefore on the role that school leaders can play to promote relational wellbeing by utilising this dynamic

nature of relationships as a means to influence and change rigid authoritative leadership control by adopting a more transformative leadership style. Unless school leaders of the future become more sophisticated in their understanding of the complexity and the dynamic relational processes of human behaviour, it is unlikely that relational wellbeing in schools will be promoted.

The researcher found it necessary to focus primarily on the current perceptions of leaders at all levels in a secondary school community. The challenge was an attempt to gain a better understanding of their experiences and thoughts about the restraining factors that affected the promotion of relational wellbeing can be addressed and challenged.

Accordingly, a single qualitative research case study, consisting of an appreciative inquiry (AI), which was followed-up by a working session, was conducted at this school. In view of the findings of study, several recommendations were made for practice and policy development.

Keywords: Relational wellbeing; school communities; community psychology; complexity perspective; transformative and complex leadership

OPSOMMING

Wêreldwyd blyk daar 'n toename in psigososiale probleme in skoolgemeenskappe te wees. Hierdie neiging kan grootliks toegeskryf word aan die toenemende kompleksiteit van die moderne samelewing.

Navorsingstudies dui daarop dat indien 'n organisasie soos 'n skool wil oorleef en die welstand van hulle leerders en alle ander betrokkenes wil bevorder, sal dit buigbaarder en aanpasbaarder ten opsigte van hierdie sosiologiese veranderinge moet wees. In hierdie studie word aangevoer dat die kompleksiteit van menslike gedrag en die komplekse aard van 'n skoolgemeenskap nie altyd ten volle besef word nie. Gevolglik is leiersfigure nie in staat om aanpassings te maak wat die skool in staat sal stel om in 'n toenemend komplekse moderne samelewing te oorleef nie.

Internasionaal probeer die meeste regerings hierdie probleem hanteer. Projekte en planne van aksie word implementeer wat die noodsaaklikheid erken dat 'n skoolgemeenskap beskou moet word as deel van ander ekologiese stelsels. Die instelling van "heelskool"-benaderings ("whole-school" approaches) in skole maak voorsiening vir hierdie interaksie en afhanklikheid tussen stelsels. Die veronderstelling is dat verandering makliker sal plaasvind indien die breër gemeenskap 'n kollektiewe visie in die oog het ten opsigte van toekomstige planne, aspirasies en doelwitte. Ten spyte van projekte wat multidimensionele interaktiewe benaderings ondersteun, word pogings tot verandering ongelukkig in die wiele gery omdat die kompleksiteit van menslike gedrag en stelsels nie ten volle besef en in ag geneem word nie. Alhoewel holistiese en kollektiewe beginsels in projekte en beleidsdokumente geïmpliseer word, word die noodsaaklikheid van die dinamiese aard van verhoudings nie altyd genoeg beklemtoon nie.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die potensiaal van dinamiese verhoudings te beklemtoon om sodoende 'n simpatieke en filantropiese skoolgemeenskap daar te stel. Op dié wyse word daadwerklike en interaktiewe verhoudingsprosesse in die vooruitsig gestel om die verhoudingwelstand van leerders en alle ander betrokkenes te bevorder. Die studie fokus op die rol wat skoolleiers kan speel in die bevordering van verhoudingwelstand deur die dinamiese aard van verhoudings te benut as 'n metode om die rigiede, outoritêre leierskapstyl te beïnvloed en te verander. Die implikasie is dat transformatiewe leierskapstyle aangewend sal moet word.

Indien toekomstige skoolleiers nie meer gesofistikeerd raak in hulle begrip van die kompleksiteit en dinamiese verhoudingprosesse van menslike gedrag nie, is dit onwaarskynlik dat verhoudingswelsyn in 'n skool bevorder sal word. Dit is gevolglik noodsaaklik dat hierdie kwessie so gou as moontlik onder die soeklig moet kom.

Die navorser het die huidige persepsies van leiers (op alle vlakke) in 'n sekondêre skool gemeenskap in Suid-Afrika ondersoek ten einde 'n beter begrip te verkry van leerders en alle ander betrokkenes se persepsies van beperkende faktore in die bevordering van verhoudingswelsyn en hoe dit hanteer kan word. 'n Enkele kwalitatiewe navorsingsgevallestudie bestaande uit 'n waarderende ondersoek (AI) is uitgevoer en opgevolg met 'n werksessie. Na aanleiding van die bevindinge van die studie word enkele aanbevelings gemaak ten opsigte van praktyk en beleid.

Sleutelwoorde: verhoudingswelsyn; skoolgemeenskappe; gemeenskapsielkunde; kompleksiteitsperspektief; transformatiewe en kompleksiteitleierskap

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Aknowledgements.	i
Abstract.	iii
Opsomming.	v
Table of Contents.	vi
CHAPTER 1: Introduction and orientation to the study	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Stating the problem	3
1.3. Aim of the study.....	10
1.4. Research design and methodology	11
1.4.1. Research design.....	11
1.4.2. Selection of participants.....	12
1.4.3. Data gathering	12
1.4.4. Data analysis.	14
1.4.5. Trustworthiness	14
1.4.6. Ethical considerations.	14
1.5.Key Terms.....	16
1.5.1. Relational wellbeing.....	16
1.5.2. School as a community.....	16
1.5.3. School leaders.....	17
1.5.4. Secondary schools.....	17
CHAPTER 2: Perspectives on the promotion of relational wellbeing and leadership in school communities	19
2.1. Introduction.....	19
2.2. Understanding schools from a community psychology perspective	19
2.3. Understanding schools from a complexity perspective.....	26
2.3.1. School as complex responsive processes of relating.....	26
2.3.2. A complex interactive dynamic systems perspective on school.....	28
2.4. Perspectives on the promotion of relational wellbeing.....	31

2.4.1. The promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities.....	35
2.4.2. The complex, emergent nature of promoting relational wellbeing.....	36
2.5. Perspectives on leadership.....	38
2.5.1. A complexity perspective on school leadership.....	40
2.6. Summary.....	43
CHAPTER 3: Research design and methodology	45
3.1. Introduction.....	45
3.2. Research design and paradigm.....	45
3.3. Context of the study	46
3.4. Research design and methodology.....	49
3.5. Participants.....	50
3.6. Data gathering.....	50
3.7. Data analysis.....	57
3.8. Trustworthiness.....	58
3.9. Ethical considerations.....	60
3.9.1. Informed consent.....	60
3.9.2. Partial confidentiality and anonymity.....	61
3.9.3. Dignity.....	62
3.9.4. Feedback to participants.....	62
3.10 Summary.....	62
CHAPTER 4: Findings of the study.....	64
4.1. Introduction.....	64
4.2. THEME 1: The current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community.....	65
4.2.1. Involvement in activities that connect members of the school community.....	65
4.2.2. Crossing boundaries to reach out to marginalised members of the school community.....	73
4.2.3. Facilitate opportunities to address concerns and needs.....	76
4.2.4. Integrative discussion of Theme 1.....	80
4.3. THEME 2: Envisaging the school community as a space where relational wellbeing is optimised.....	83
4.3.1. The school community as a caring and supportive place for all.....	83
4.3.2. The school community as a harmonious and secure space.....	85
4.3.3. The school community as a creative inspiring space.....	87
4.3.4. Integrative discussion of theme 2.....	88

4.4. THEME 3: Facilitating optimal relational wellbeing in the school community.....	90
4.4.1. Pro-active promotion of relational wellbeing.....	90
4.4.2. Create opportunities to connect with one another.....	91
4.4.3. Enhance collaboration on multiple levels.....	93
4.4.4. Integrative discussion of theme 3.....	94
4.5. Brief summary of findings.....	98
CHAPTER5:Summary, conclusions and recommendations.....	100
5.1. Introduction.....	100
5.2. Focus of the research.....	100
5.3. Conclusions of the study.....	102
5.3.1. Conclusions with reference to the current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community.....	103
5.3.2. Conclusion with reference to envisioned promotion of relational wellbeing.....	107
5.3.3. Conclusions with reference to facilitate the sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing in the school community.....	109
5.3.4. Final conclusions.....	112
5.4. Recommendations.....	115
5.4.1. Recommendation for research.....	115
5.4.2. Recommendations for practice.....	115
5.5. Limitations and strength of study.....	118
5.6. Final word.....	120
REFERENCE LIST.....	122
ADDENDA.....	137
Addendum A.....	137
Addendum B.....	142
Addendum C.....	144



LIST OF DIAGRAMS.....x
Diagram 1.1.....13
Diagram 3.1.....51

LIST OF TABLES.....x
Table 3.1.....48
Table 3.2.....49
Table 3.3.....55
Table 3.4.....56
Table 4.1.....64

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The promotion of a holistic approach to the learning and developmental process of young people is a vital part of the core business of schools. This objective is only possible in a supportive school environment that is conducive to learning, happiness, security, mental as well as physical health, and, for the purposes of this study in particular, relational wellbeing. Therefore, schools should be transformed into institutions that promote the health and wellbeing of all learners (WHO, 2009).

Schools in South Africa are facing serious challenges in this regard due to the historical disadvantaged position of many schools (Lazarus, 2006) that left them with limited resources to provide support to learners and develop strategies to promote their wellbeing. Consequently, this task becomes even more difficult due to the high prevalence of emotional, behavioural, and social problems that occur in schools (Lazarus, 2006). According to Craig (2007) problems experienced with reference to young people's wellbeing are often the result of a wide variety of social and cultural changes, which include family and community breakdown, pressure to achieve, impact of mass media and a decline in religion to name just a few factors.

However, emotional, behavioural, and social problems in schools are not unique to specific countries. These psychosocial problems are experienced in schools in highly developed countries like the USA and the UK as well as in developing countries like South Africa. In South Africa, as in the rest of the world, there is a growing gap between rich and poor that causes growing frustration and conflict among groups (Craig, 2007).

Bowman (2014) argues that leadership is learnable and that it begins with leading oneself. He reasons that in a modern global culture that satisfy nobody, attempts to change it

must become everyone's responsibility to sustain a globally interconnected, morally interdependent world. In an era of increasing interconnectedness the leadership lesson, according to Bowman (2014), is that diverse perspectives characteristically derive from complex causes and conditions.

Mackellar (2009) also argues that those in leadership positions in schools have to set the tone for addressing these problems. This view is supported by Fullan (2002), who argues that all those in leadership positions in schools need to be sophisticated at conceptual thinking and at transforming schools into the organisation whereby people are valued. From this position, relationships are considered the single most common factor to successful change in schools. These relationships are understood as the matrix of dynamic interactions between all those involved in the school – in particular between leaders and other members of the school since leaders reinforce the desired values and behaviours of those members (Bolman & Deal 1997, Schein, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1984, 1994).

Therefore, school leaders must lead their schools through relationships, and not rules, tasks or structures (Leech, et al., 2003). Referring to the rigid controlling nature of schools Seidman (as cited in Bowman, 2014) supports the conviction that values, and not rules, should define the nature and purpose of leadership. He asks the question, "In daily practice, how efficient and effective are our school rules in governing student conduct? – "Rules lives outside of us" – "Rules respond to behavior, they don't lead it" (p. 62). Learners are frequently out of touch with the underlying societal and original rationale of school rules. Therefore, they tend to have only a superficial relationship to rules – "rules are outside of us" (Bowman 2014). Rules suppress value-based leadership that allows effective leaders to inspire and encourage the power of shared values, truth, honesty, integrity, transparency, fairness, justice, accountability, community and humility (Bowman, 2014).

However, in South African school contexts, those in leadership positions still rely steadfastly on the traditional modernist approach that supports a mentality of a hierarchical, bureaucratic organisation in addressing these problems. Consequently, linear and reductionist efforts aimed at maintaining control and equilibrium at all costs are evident. Yet, according to complexity theorists (Stacey, 2001, 2007, Jörg, 2009; Morrison, 2002), human behaviour emerge in the dynamic interaction between people and can therefore not be controlled by a rigid system of rules and regulations (Stacey, 2001; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Human behaviour needs to be understood as a complex endeavour; therefore, teachers should accept this complexity as a reality and plan accordingly.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a corresponding paradigm shift by actively engaging all those in leadership positions in the school selected as an instrumental case study. To this end, an appreciative inquiry process was applied in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how these leaders perceived the promotion of relational wellbeing in their school community.

1.2. Stating the problem

In view of the shared concerns about the problems experienced in schools, the promotion of mental health and wellbeing has become an international priority. Following the initial call for schools to become enabling environments, the World Health Organisation (WHO) developed a framework for the guidance of the promotion of health and wellbeing of young people across the world. Within this framework a holistic preventative and promotional approach is suggested. Other examples of international policy makers to reform organisations to develop the wellbeing of children across the world (WHO: Information Series on School Health, 2013; UNICEF, 2007; United Kingdom Faculty of Public Health, 2010; Ministry of Health New Zealand, 2014; WHO: Global School Health Initiative, 2014). All these initiatives and policies clearly indicate that governments, departments of health and

education, and schools in particular play an important role in nurturing the wellbeing of the whole child and the enhancement of their capacity to lead a good life. In conclusion, there seems to be little doubt that there is an underlying assumption in policy and associated initiatives that schools *do* play a major part in the promotion of people's wellbeing (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010).

In South Africa, the constitutional rights of children to education and wellbeing had to be reinforced through the development of a number of transformative, educational, social, and economic policies (Harber & Mncube, 2011). The relational wellbeing of South African children is implied in the process of reform towards an inclusive educational system. This shift towards reform was realised through the development of White Paper 6 (1996) entitled "Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System". This was followed up by the National Department of Health's statement (2002) that the emphasis must be on the creation of teaching and learning through the complete development of the school and other sites. These policies recognised that barriers to education can be located within a complex set of given aspects. These include the learner, the site of learning or school, the educational system and the broader social, economic and political context within the site of a school (systemic barriers), as well as within the broader social, economic and political context (societal barriers).

The intent of this study is to address all these barriers by adopting a holistic ecological systems approach. This approach based on the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979), is founded on the premise that there are multiple sources of positive and negative influences at work in an individual's life emanating from the family, school, community and society. This approach provides a basis for understanding schools as a multidimensional and dynamic interactive system. Moreover, the approach suggests that any process of change in schools should involve all the members of the school community. The whole-school approach as a system

based on an ecological way of viewing a school (Crown, 2012) often apply processes that are based on community-development principles. The concept of community development refers to the idea that change is more likely to occur when the whole-school community develops and shares a vision about plans and goals. This approach usually start with the school community engaging in a measure of contemplation to raise awareness, identify needs and create a vision (Crown, 2012).

Concurring with the holistic ecological approach, Atkinson (2013) argues that there are three reasons why policy and programme interventions often fail. Firstly, the focus of interventions is on problems within the individual and the important role that the environment plays in terms of sustainability of these interventions, is not considered. Consequently, learners who experience emotional and behavioural problems are placed in special classes, treatment programmes, and special corrective orientated schools with peers who have similar problems and difficulties (Farmer & Farmer, 1999).

Schools also tend to apply these individualist strategies to improve wellbeing by involving individual learners in programmes to develop skills like problem solving, conflict resolution and anger management. These programmes are often of short duration, because they typically persist to be part of school routine and frequently lack environmental support at home and school (Farmer & Farmer, 1999). When these individualist strategies and interventions fail, disciplinary action usually follows, which may include dismissal or expulsion of these individuals (Atkinson, 2013).

According to Atkinson (2013), the second reason why programmes fail is the lack of a more holistic view and approach to wellbeing. She states that wellbeing should be seen as a process rather than a desirable endpoint. Prilleltensky also criticises what he refers to as a “psycho-centric” individualistic approach to wellbeing strategies (Prilleltensky, Peirson & Nelson, 1997). According to these authors, holism relates to the whole person, the whole

community, and the whole context, because each of these fragments contains information about the whole. Prilleltensky, Nelson, and Peirson (1997) argue that wellbeing is located in individuals, organisations and communities, and that unless all these areas are considered as a dynamic unit it is unlikely that wellbeing can be achieved (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

The third reason why projects in the promotion of wellbeing fail is the fact that the importance of relations in a school is not fully realised (Atkinson, 2013). According to Roffey (2008) even projects that to some extent *do* recognise the importance of relations between people in a school still fail. This happens because the primary focus is often on individual learners rather than on the wellbeing inherent in positive relationship building between all members in a school and community. The focus should rather be on building a web of loving relationships (Roffey, 2008)

In summary, it seems clear from the preceding discussion that the failure of programmes aimed at the promotion of wellbeing might be because the approach is individualised and not holistic in nature, and that the importance of relationships is not realised. Yet, theorists and researchers increasingly appreciate the fact that relatedness is of such importance that it can be defined as a basic need essential for wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2001). These authors, among others (e.g., Vieno et al., 2005; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010) have demonstrated that this fundamental need is dependent on warm, trusting, and supportive relationships. People experience greater relatedness when they feel understood and engaged in meaningful conversation (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Relationships are formed through communication and interaction. When this happens people feel that they belong and a sense of community is created (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Ma, 2003). Particular note must be taken of the holistic view of Prilleltensky (2005), which emphasises the importance of interconnectedness and the dependency between systems. From this perspective, the value of caring, compassion, and support that include empathy and

the concern for the welfare of others is an important theme in his theoretical reasoning (Prilleltensky, Nelson & Peirson, 1997; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

The basic assumption, well supported by research, is that the wellbeing of the individual is not only influenced by personal factors, but also by transactions between the person and the social and physical environment. According to this perspective, wellness is a positive state of affairs brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, relational, and collective needs. When this holistic principle is ignored and/or any of these components are absent, wellbeing cannot be achieved (Prilleltensky, Nelson & Peirson, 2001; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Schools are considered by Prilleltensky (2005) as an ideal site for the promotion of wellbeing. Not only are schools structures between individuals and communities, but they can play a central role in the development and improvement of learners' interpersonal skills, respect and sensitivity to others (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Through interaction with others, relationships are formed that are ideally affective in nature. Prilleltensky (2005) reasons that through this positive interaction, relational wellbeing will not only be enhanced but it will also reduce the risk of interpersonal conflict and antisocial behaviour. In concurrence with this position, Roffey (2008) argues that relational wellbeing can be generated by the numerous interactions that occur every day in a school to create trust, foster mutual respect, and promote mutual support and collaboration.

According to Evans and Prilleltensky (2007), relationships between the members of a community promote individual as well as collective wellbeing in that community. It is therefore argued that if we wish to co-construct enabling school communities where the health and wellbeing of all the members are promoted, we need to give more attention to the relationships between the members (Kitching, 2010). In such a nurturing relational environment, which includes respect for diversity, support, and cooperation, a school

becomes a purposeful community able to facilitate democratic participation, empowerment, and transformation. Through ameliorative and transformative progressive changes in the school system, social justice, accountability, and meaningful participation can be achieved (Sergiovanni, 1994; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006; Prilleltensky, 2011). A school must therefore be seen as a multidimensional and interactive system that can learn and change (Crown, 2009). Hence, schools can be considered as powerful institutions that influence social development and relationships in schools that are instrumental to the wellbeing of all members and the promotion of mental health.

Through the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing, an enabling school environment that will not only improve relationships, pro-social behaviour and resilience, but also establish academic performance. There is strong evidence from numerous studies that academic performance improves in the above-described climate where relational wellbeing is at high levels (McGrath & Noble as cited in Roffey, 2008).

Fullan (as cited in Dickerson, 2012) argues that during the 21st century the emphasis will shift from standard learner achievement to leadership. According to Fullan (2001), leaders must instil energy, enthusiasm and hope in order to navigate the complexity of a constant-changing school environment. In order to do so they will have to understand the dynamics of the change process, build relationships, exhibit purpose and develop schools into learning organisations (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010; Dickerson, 2012). Considering the current positions of control often held by those in leadership positions in school communities as well as the importance research attach to a new understanding of leaderships that emphasise the appreciation of relationships between members of the school community, it seems critical to enable school leadership regarding the promotion of relational wellbeing.

In this regard, Rost (as cited in Leech et al., 2003) reasons that if leadership can be defined as an influential relationship among leaders and members of a school community

with the intent to bring about change, one of the most important ingredients of leadership is the nature of relationships. Through their daily interactions with the members of the school, leaders can reinforce the desired values and behaviours amongst these members (Sergiovanni, 1992, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Rost as cited in Leech et al., 2003).

The complexity perspective provides a framework and model that allows a school to be flexible and adaptable (Suchman, 1998, 2002). Because of the fact that the complexity theory views organisations like schools as complex, adaptive systems, the implication is that nature possesses powerful energetic dynamics of self-organisation in order to survive.

According to the responsiveness processes of relating (Stacey, 2001, 2003, 2007; Suchman, 2002) this dynamic potential for self-organisation and change are inherent in the everyday interactions between the members in a school environment. School leaders have to take note of the importance of this process of relational interaction and its potential to enhance and promote relational wellbeing.

According to Stacey (2007), it is time to rethink the approach to mental health and the promotion of wellbeing. A shift in thinking towards a more radical social understanding of people in their relationships is suggested. Human behaviour is too complex to be controlled by a rigid system of rules and regulations (Stacey, 2007; Morrison, 2002). This aspect is considered to be important because school leaders of the future will not only have to understand the complexity and dynamic nature of human behaviour, but also that of the system they operate in to achieve any success in the promotion of relational wellbeing.

From the above reasoning, it becomes clear that leaders in South Africa have to be more attuned to a bigger picture of the complexity of the enhancement of wellbeing at a school level. Sophisticated conceptual thinking and transforming schools through relationships are suggested. In South Africa, the emotional, behavioural, and social problems of schools are addressed in a linear, reductionist manner in order to keep control and maintain

equilibrium, while the complex dynamics of human behaviour is not fully realised and recognised (Kitching, 2010).

However, despite the emphasis on the importance of relationships in the facilitation of positive school experiences, limited research has been conducted on school leadership and the promotion of wellbeing. In this study, the researcher intends to address the problem perceived in practice as well as the gap in the research; informed by a bio- and social ecological systems theory, the complex responsiveness process of relating theory and the complex interactive dynamic systems theory.

The proposed study will be guided by the following primary question:

How do the perceptions of school leaders of current as well as anticipated practices inform our understanding of the promotion of relational wellbeing?

To answer this question the following subsequent questions were addressed:

- What do school leaders applying an appreciative inquiry approach perceive as practices that currently contribute to the promotion of relational wellbeing in their school communities?
- What do school leaders applying an appreciative inquiry approach perceive as practice that needs to be implemented to promote relational wellbeing in their school communities?

1.3. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to apply an appreciative inquiry approach (AI) to explore the perceptions of school leaders on the promotion of relational wellbeing in a secondary school community. During the inquiry, the perceptions of these school leaders were investigated by means of qualitative analysis by making use of this method of inquiry (AI).

1.4. Research design and methodology

In this section of Chapter 1, only a brief overview of the research design and the methodology will be presented. In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology are presented to provide more information.

1.4.1. Research design

A qualitative case study design was applied in this study in combination with an appreciative inquiry approach. Qualitative research allows researcher to attempts to place herself in the world of the participants, allowing them to see the world through the lens of the participants (Flick, 2007). Adding to this, Anderson (2006) states that qualitative research is more subjective than quantitative research where a researcher can use a variety of methods to collect information. In this study, a qualitative methodological approach was applied by giving participants open-ended questionnaires and conducting a working session to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions and experiences that school leaders have of relational wellbeing in their school.

According to Maree (2010), a case study design strives towards a holistic understanding of how participants create meaning of such phenomena under study. Because of the case study design in this investigation, the researcher can enter the “life world” of the participants and gain some degree of understanding regarding the perceptions of these school leaders on relational wellbeing (De Vos et. al., 2011).

The four-phased appreciative inquiry approach (AI) was used in this study to gather data from the participants on their perceptions and lived experiences of relational wellbeing in their school. According to Hall & Hammond (2008), this type of inquiry is a way of thinking with the potential of making a powerful, purposeful change in organisations.

1.4.2. Selection of participants

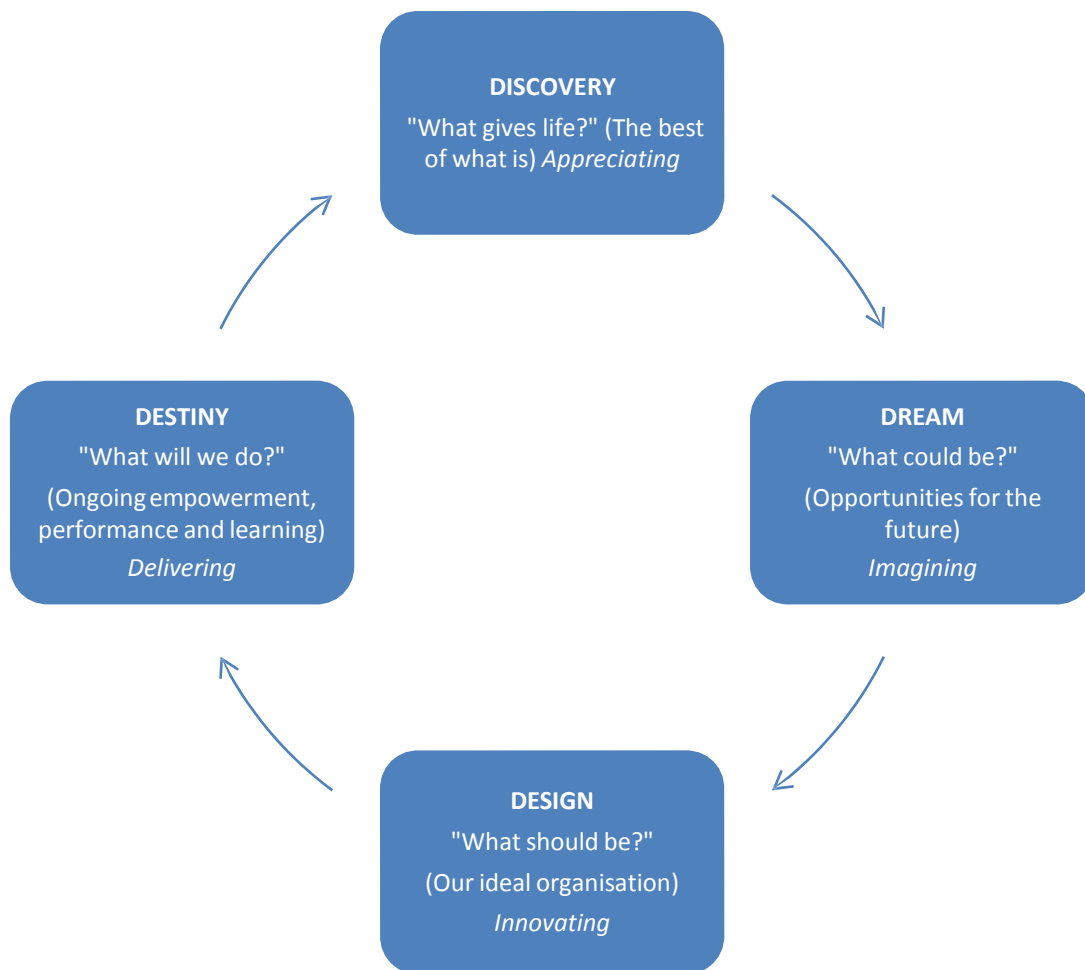
The population from which the participants were selected included all members who played a leadership role in the particular secondary school. This heterogeneous group includes the principal, deputy principals, and heads of departments, school-based support team, educators, and the representative council of learners (RCL). All the school leaders in the school studied were invited; 30 volunteered to participate in the study.

1.4.3. Data gathering

An appreciative inquiry (AI) approach to organisational community development was applied to collect the data in this study. AI focuses on the principles of “positivity” and “generativity capacity” (Bushe, 2010; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). This approach is based on the assumption that people, groups, and organizations have the capacities, resources and strength to give life and energy to a system (Hall & Hammond, 2008). It occurs when a group of people discovers and creates new ideas and provokes new actions. Spontaneous, unsupervised, individual group and organisational action towards a better future is generated. The focus is on changing how people think and on supporting self-organising change processes that flow from new ideas (Bushe, 2010).

The researcher made use of a two-phased process to gather data, based on the AI approach. In the first phase of the research the participants (n = 30) was asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire (Addendum A). The questionnaire was developed based on the four-dimensional cycle of inquiry of the AI approach, as indicated below:

Diagram 1.1: Appreciative Inquiry



(Adapted from Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999.)

A table with all the questions included in the questionnaire is presented in paragraph 3.2. To ensure that participants understood the questions the researcher had brief sessions with all the participants to introduce them to the construct “relational wellbeing”. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire after these sessions.

In the second phase of the research process, themes were identified from the preliminary findings. The researcher specifically chose a working-session format as a method in this study to allow participants to build on one another’s ideas and comments to ensure rich data with new and different perspectives. Debate was encouraged and conflicting viewpoints were allowed (as suggested by Maree, 2010 and to some extent permitted by AI inquiry) to obtain a deeper understanding of the participants’ perceptions regarding the

promotion of relational wellbeing in the school community. However, the focus strongly encouraged the positive and generative nature of AI inquiry.

1.4.4. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis based on an interpretive paradigm aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content from the different data sets (Maree, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) was used in this study. This implies a process of transformation where the raw data collected from the *open-ended questionnaires* and the *work session* could be processed to valuable findings that may contribute to the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A process of thematic analysis was also used to identify the different themes identified in the data sets obtained from the *open-ended questionnaires* as well as the *work session*. The process of thematic analysis according to Braun & Clarke was followed. It involved six steps, namely: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.4.5. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured by using crystallisation as an analysis process. Crystallisation is a method in which the results obtained are validated through multiple methods of data collection (Maree, 2010; Creswell, 2011). A more in-depth discussion on the ways that crystallisation was applied in this study will be presented in Chapter 4.

1.4.6. Ethical considerations

In this research study the actions of the researcher were based on the principles of human rights and the safety of the public as formulated by the Constitution of South-Africa (1996) and the ethical rules of the Health Professions Council of South-Africa (HPCSA, 1974). The researcher accepted the ethical responsibilities to formulate a well-researched

project based on the ethical rules of dignity, privacy and informed consent as well as confidentiality.

Before embarking on this research project, a research proposal was submitted to the ethical committee of the NWU to ensure that all ethical standards were adhered to. The North-West University duly approved the study under the ethical code NWU-00060-12-A1. Thereafter the researcher approached the school principal. Permission for participation was subsequently granted for participants from this particular school to partake in the study.

All participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any given time without endangering their position in the school. Thus, participants were in no way pressurised to partake in the study; involvement was voluntary. In order to obtain permission from the deputy principals, heads of department, school-based support team, teachers, parents, teachers, and assent from learners, all parties were informed in writing of the rationale, aim, and possible contribution of the study. Once all the participants were informed about what the study entails, they were asked to sign an assent form (Addendum C). The parents of RCL learners (learners under the age of 18) who chose to partake in this study were asked to sign consent form on behalf of their children to authorise participation (Addendum B). The learners themselves had to sign assent forms as well.

All necessary measures were taken to ensure that the participants who took part in this study were protected against any harm by securing a safe space in which discussions could be conducted. However, because *privacy* could only be partially protected due to the participants' position in the school, the *identity* of every participant was protected in reporting of the findings study by using codes in the report.

Only the researcher and the supervisor handled the data obtained. Data was not discussed with any participant or staff member who were not involved in the study. The raw

and transcribed data was kept in safekeeping at the Centre for Child, Youth, and Family Studies at the North-West University. Only the supervisor and an administrative staff member who signed a confidentiality agreement had access to the data including the recordings, transcriptions as well as the completed questionnaires.

On completion of this study, the school leadership as well as the staff and the non-participating members will be invited to attend an assembly meeting. During this meeting, they will be informed about the findings of this study as discussed in Chapter 4, as well as about any recommendations that was made by the researcher.

1.5. Key terms

1.5.1. Relational wellbeing

Relational wellbeing can be considered as a specific dimension of the general wellbeing of an individual. In this dimension individuals requires “a network of positive and supportive relationships” that encourage them to “participate freely in social, community and political life” in order to experience and achieve relational wellbeing (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010:30).

In such a space indicators of relational wellbeing would include caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, affection, support, collaboration and democratic participation in the decision-making processes (Prilleltensky, 2005). This author further conceptualised relationships as one of the three sites of wellbeing, existing with the personal and community sites, in which relationships serves as the mediating factor.

1.5.2. Schools as communities

This study conceptualised schools as communities informed by the ecological-system perspective. Communities are thus described as networks of social relationships with common characteristics, values, and interests. They share various levels of complexity, and

are in constant interaction with one another (Visser, 2007). In this regard, McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) elaborate on a sense of community in schools by focussing on “school connectedness”, which is described as interlinked activities and experiences. McMillan & Chavis (1986) define sense of community as a feeling of belonging, a feeling that members matter to each other and to the group, and a shared belief that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.

Relationships are therefore crucial for school connectedness. A school community can only be realised when relationships between all members of the school, community, and individuals in the wider society forms part of the creation and survival of this microsystem.

1.5.3. School leaders

There are numerous perspectives, approaches, and definitions of school leadership to be found in literature. Sergiovanni (1984) describes aspects of school leadership metaphorically as forces available to administrators, supervisors, and teachers because they influence the events in schooling. Robinson (as cited in Halvorsen & Skrovset, 2014) defines leadership as the processes of influencing others to act in ways that support the core objective of an organisation like a school (therefore facilitating student learning).

In context of this study, school leaders are referred to as all members of this particular school who hold any type of leadership role.

1.5.4. Secondary schools

Globally secondary schooling is usually referred to as a period of education between primary school and leaving school to pursue a career or continue with tertiary education. In the South African secondary school system, learners between Grade 8 to 12 are accommodated. Grade 7 to 9 is known as the Senior Phase and Grade 10 to 12 is known as

the FET Phase (Further Education and Training). School attendance is compulsory up until Grade 9 (or 15 years of age) after which learners can decide whether they want to continue with the FET Phase. A matriculation (Grade 12) certificate is obtained after the successful completion of the FET Phase. Important to this study is the fact that the significant development phases of adolescence and the formation of identity associated with the investigation occur during the secondary phase of education.

CHAPTER 2

The promotion of relational wellbeing and leadership in school communities

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the conceptual framework that provides the basis for this study is introduced. It serves as a point of reference for the discussion of the findings and contribution of this study as presented in Chapter 4. The research literature was derived from various sources, including policy documents, journal articles, and books referring to national and international contexts. Limited research has been conducted on school leadership and the promotion of relational wellbeing within the field of psychology. In this chapter the researcher therefore presents various perspectives and approaches related to the constructs.

2.2. Understanding schools from a community psychology perspective

In order to gain an understanding of and insight into the perceptions of school leaders in the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools, a community psychology perspective was applied as a basis for understanding why schools are such important contexts for the promotion of relational wellbeing.

The primary goal of community psychology is to promote people's wellbeing (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; Visser, 2007). In order to achieve this objective, community psychology explore the social interaction within social systems in order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics as well as the needs of people within these systems sufficiently to establish the resources needed to meet their needs (Reich et al, 2007).

According to Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001), a community psychology approach reacts pragmatically to the limitations associated with problem-orientated and individual-centred approaches to solve problems in communities. Community psychology therefore

holds a shift in focus to the interactive dynamics between all involved in the system, as well as between individuals and their environment. From a community psychology perspective, school communities should be understood in terms of the continuous interactions that should be considered in efforts to contribute to the development of schools as enabling spaces. The community psychology approach strongly relies on the ecological perspective to explicate the impact of the environment on the lives of those who function within these systems – in this case the school environment (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010).

From an ecological perspective, optimal functioning is seen as a relationship between an individual and a system in which the functioning of both is maximised. In other words, the system is optimised as a whole; the focus is not on maximising one part at the expense of another. The so-called congruent state of optimal functioning implies a dynamic, complex equilibrium or integration (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003). According to this perspective, a healthy individual is characterised by a complex set of diverse behaviours and emotions that functions in a dynamic equilibrium. It implies a balance between stability and change. Healthy individuals find themselves in a system relatively open to different experiences that involve transformation to a higher level of complexity, but retain enough sameness” to protect the stability of the system (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003).

Roffey (2008), states that the eco-systemic approach referred to as a person-process context view of change and development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) facilitates an understanding of schools as part of multi-dimensional and interactive systems, Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that the world of humans consists of a hierarchy of five systems of interactions. The five systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. Schools are viewed as micro-systems – an important element of Bronfenbrenner’s model is that humans are active participants in their development and their individual perceptions of their contexts play a fundamental role in understanding how they

will interact with their environments and influences the way in which they respond to their contexts (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

Kelly (1966) identified four ecological principles that guides our understanding of the interaction between individuals and the school environments, as an important micro-system namely, the principle of interdependence. This indicates that individuals in a school are in a position to support one another in the promotion of their wellbeing; the principle of cycling resources indicating that untapped resources might exist in a community and should be identified and allocated to promote wellbeing, the principle of adaption indicating that individuals and systems can cope and adapt to changing conditions in the macro-system and the principle of succession suggests that there is a need to plan a preferred scenario regarding the promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities.

Informed by the ecological system perspective schools are considered as communities. Sarason (1974) describes the importance of a psychological “sense of community” in organisations such as schools, and suggested that schools should therefore be perceived as communities. In due course, the works of Sergiovanni (1994) and Strike (2000, 2004) supported Sarason’s suggestion. Sergiovanni (1994, 1996) also suggests that schools should be conceived of as communities rather than organisations. The learning environment as a community can promotes meaningful personal relationships and shared values to become the foundation for school reform. This concept of a school as a community implies a shift from a collection of “I’s” to a collective “we”, and that the collective “we” contributes towards a sense of belonging, place, and identity. Through a cohesive bond, a climate or culture in a school that fosters and promote relational wellbeing can be created.

Sense of community is defined by McMillan and Chavis (1986) as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group

and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p.1). The authors reason that for a school to become community space for its learners, a sense of membership, influence, integration, and fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection must be established.

A sense of community would thus include a perceived similarity between school members, an acknowledgement of interdependence as well as a willingness to maintain cohesiveness by means of reciprocity and a feeling of being part of the bigger microstructure that provides structural security. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) further elaborate on the notion of sense of community by focussing on "school connectedness", which can be described as an interlinked group of activities and experiences. These connections include relationships between school members, learner satisfaction, a feeling of membership to the community and traits such as participation and learners' voice.

McMillian & Chavis (1986) describe the composure of sense of community by identifying the following four elements:

1. Membership, which consists of the following dimensions: emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system.
2. Influence, which work both ways: members of a group must feel empowered to have influence over what a group does and group cohesiveness depends upon the group having some influence over its members.
3. Integration and fulfilment of needs: members of groups feel rewarded in many ways for their participation in the community.
4. Shared emotional connection (according to the authors) is the defining element for true community. This includes the role of shared history and shared participation (or at least identification with history).

According to Goodenow and Grady (as cited in Ma, 2003), a sense of community or belonging is the extent to which learners feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported in the school social environment.

Concerning the sense of community and belonging, Albert (as cited in Ma, 2003) conceptualised it into three “C’s”, namely connect, capable and contribute. Firstly, *connect* emphasises members’ need to bond with one another and with teachers. This requirement is facilitated by cooperative learning between learners and by teachers acknowledging and encouraging the learner. Secondly, *capable* emphasises that teachers need to help students to feel efficient. Modifying tasks and assignments provide learners with successful learning experiences. Thirdly, *contribute* emphasises that learners need to contribute to their school. Performing duties in which they take responsibility and can become line leaders provide them with opportunities to feel valued. In support of a sense of community and belonging to a school community, Strike (2000, 2004) advocates and promotes a community that should root the school in a shared educational project, which comprises of coherence (shared vision and language); cohesion (a sense of community); care (to engage all members); and contact (the structural features of the school) (Strike, 2004).

When learners feel they belong in the school and that their contribution is valued, a sense of community is created. The sense of community and belonging can be defined as the extent to which learners feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported in the school’s social environment (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2003; Ma, 2003). This sense of community and belonging in the school setting is not only linked to motivational, attitudinal and behavioural factors that are associated with the school success (Ma, 2003), but also to psychological wellbeing and adjustment.

Numerous studies have confirmed a relation between a sense of belonging and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Vieno, et al., 2005; Ma, 2003; McLaughlin and Clarke, 2010). A sense of community in a school has been associated with greater happiness, self-esteem, social skills, social support, and academic achievement. The experience of belongingness (connectedness) is also associated with more concern and respect for peers and teachers'' altruistic and constructive social behaviour and adherence to democratic norms and values (Vieno et al., 2005; Ma 2003). It is argued that connectedness can therefore even be considered as an indicator for wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The positive effects of belonging in relationships are mediated by the need for satisfaction. The need for autonomy, competence and relatedness can be specified within such relationships. The wellbeing of people is dependent on warm, trusting, and supportive relationships in which they feel understood and can engage in meaningful dialogue (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan & Deci, 1991; Vieno, et al., 2005; McLaughlin & Clarke, 2010). Rogers (as cited in Meyer, Moore and Viljoen, 2003) believes that apart from the strong need for actualisation, there are two other basic needs underscoring and directing behaviour. The need for positive regard from others relates to the human being's basic need of approval, appreciation, love, admiration, and respect. It is also closely associated with the positive regard from others.

The belongingness hypothesis suggests that human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In addition, the authors reason that two criteria have to be met for people to form and maintain their desired relationships: Firstly, people need frequent, affectively pleasant personal contacts with other people. Secondly, these interactions must take place within the context of a temporarily stable and enduring framework where there is affective concern for each other's welfare (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

It can be reasoned that if the need to belong is a fundamental motivation, it should stimulate goal-directed activities to satisfy it. People should reach out to make interpersonal contact and attempt to reach a minimum level of social contact and relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Cognitive action will also come into play in this pervasive concern to establish and maintain these relationships. Undoubtedly, emotional reactions will follow from the outcomes of this need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

During the adolescent period of young people's lives, schools are especially important, because this period involves explaining aspects of personal identity separate from parents and non-familiar peers and significant adult figures, like educators (Vieno et al., 2005). In a school these adolescents (learners) are exposed to constant personal contacts and basically forced to form relationships (McLaughlin & Clarke, 2003; Ma, 2003).

When adolescent learners' adjustment in the school is not successful and a sense of community is not developed, it is likely that emotional and behavioural problems may occur, because such learners feel unaccepted and rejected. Learners who lack a sense of belonging have a tendency to believe in ways to evoke or construct a social context that helps maintain their problematic behaviour patterns. Problem behaviour causes peers to either reinforce or escalate the behaviour. In this way, youth with problematic behaviour are likely to be avoided by more pro social peers and rather to develop relationships with those peers who reflect or compliment their behaviour. The problem behaviour is likely to be expressed in a coercive cycle of behavioural exchange between the youth and the new environment is likely to emerge (Snyder et al, as cited in Farmer & Farmer, 1999). These types of interactional processes often results in a string of relationships with deviant peers who in turn has been linked to a variety of problematic outcomes.

2.3. Understanding schools from a complexity perspective

2.3.1 School as complex responsive processes of relating

Complexity theory was initially developed within the physical sciences in order to describe and explain systems too complex to understand or model through linear computation (Wood & Butt, 2014). Although complexity theory originated within the natural sciences, it has been increasingly applied to describe and analyse complex social settings. In this regard, complexity theory reveals the dynamics and forces present within and across organisations like a school that no other approach offers (Wood & Butt, 2014).

The complex responsiveness process of relating theory is a combination of the work of Elias and Mead (Stolorow, 1993). Elias recognised the influence of interdependence in arguing that individuals always pursue their own plans when interacting with one another, thus challenging the idea of individual agency (Stacey, 2007). Mead (as cited in Stolorow, 1993) sees the interaction between people as a complex, nonlinear, iterative process of communicative interaction between the mind, the self and society, which emerge simultaneously in the living present (Charon, 2005). From the perspective of the intersubjectivity theory (Stolorow, 1993) people are not seen as objects that merely affect one another, but as subjects that form mutual experiences of one another in their interaction (Stacey, 2007). Stacey (2001, 2003, 2007) and his colleagues (Shaw, 2002; Streatfield, 2001) developed the theory of complexity responsive processes relating from these theoretical perspectives. The theory was developed in response to the psychoanalytic-orientated approach that explained the interaction of humans and their relationships in terms of a drive release or inherited fantasies (Stacey, 2007). Its development was also a response to the humanistic psychology that explained relationships in terms of actualisation within a system

(Stacey, 2007). Another problem with the above-mentioned theories is that both postulate the individual as primary to the group.

Stacey (2007) reasons that anything subjected to human thinking and the unpredictability of human behaviour are too complex to form a system. There is therefore no place for systems thinking and human interaction can only be understood within an unpredictable, dynamic process of nonlinear communication and interaction (Stacey, 2007). In this sense the communication and interaction between people is a self-organising process and not a process of parts participating in something outside their direct interaction. There are no hypothetical or even spatial boundaries between the controlled and controller – they are part of the network of processes (Stacey, 2007).

In due course, along with his colleagues Shaw (2002) and Streatfield (2001), Stacey (2007, 2001, 2003) abandoned individual and systems thinking to develop the theory of complex responsive processes of relating. The theory of complex responsive processes offers a relational alternative to the controlling and restricting nature of the system and even to complex adaptive systems theory (Stacey 2000). The value of this theory is contained in the emphasis on the importance of communication and relationships by improving the functioning of an organisation like a school (Suchman et al, 2002; Stacey 2000, 2007).

Human beings as nonlinear beings must be considered in their full dynamic complexity as essentially generative in the generative kind of human connectedness (Buber as cited in Jörg, 2009). Through the unknown dynamics of the complexity of their communicative human interaction, humans may transform each other (Kauffman as cited in Jörg, 2009). Instead of focussing on some kind of abstract systemic whole, the emphasis should rather be shifted to observable evidence and principles. In other words, the focus should rather be on what people are doing in their relationships in the “living present”. These

everyday nonlinear interactions and relationships between people in an organisation construct their future as continuity and transformation at the same time (Stacey, 2000; 2007; Suchman et al. 2002). According to these authors, the private conversation of individuals“ thinking constitutes the same self-organizing processes as public conversations – iterative interactions of symbols in which patterns of meaning emerge, propagate, evolve, and/or transform. Thus, conversations do not only take place between individuals, but there are also the constant conversations we have with ourselves. These inner conversations not only recreate and maintain an agreed order, but also generate novel ideas (Stacey 2001; 2007).

To elucidate: a story is an account of action sequences, events, and emotional states, while a narrative is the story linked, for example, to reflections, comments and categorisation based on various elements of the story line. Conversations, stories, and narratives can therefore be described as complex responsive processes of symbols that interact with each other (Stacey 2000; 2007; Uhl-Bien, Marion, McKelvey, 2007). Individuals may consciously attempt to influence the evolving pattern of meaning to their desired pattern. Paradoxically, however, although individuals perceive themselves as acting *upon* a process from the outside, they are always acting *within* that process (Suchman, 2002). In this sense the communication and interaction between people is a self-organising process, and not a process of parts participating in something from outside their direct interaction.

2.3.2. A complex interactive dynamic systems perspective on schools

This approach should not be considered as a theory in itself but rather a shift in focus within the conceptual framework of the complexity theories. Jörg (2009) describes his views as a “co-creation” of ideas that derives from the complexity theories.

The focus of Jörg’s (2009) reasoning towards a change in educational approaches is founded on the premise of the complexity theories that human behaviour is a complex

dynamic process in which people are influenced by one another (Stacey, 2000; 2003). In this sense, it can be reasoned that the individual does not stand alone, but rather in relation to others. Human beings, as potentially nonlinear beings, may be conceived as dynamically linked to potential states of being. In this view of complexity thinking, learners are considered as potentially nonlinear beings linked to their environmental context, that is, other learners and together they form complex networks (Jörg, 2009).

Jörg (2009) furthermore reasons that reality can possibly be understood in terms of possibilities and potentials that co-emerge in relationships. This “new” reality is thus created through relationships in which there are dynamic nonlinear processes within and between relational networks. In other words, learning through interaction should be viewed as a dynamic process of change within and between dynamic interconnected networks. The phenomena of “emergence” can be viewed as a result of these interconnected networks.

The basic principle and emerging probabilities of this point of view is that “learning learns itself” (Suchman & Schorr as cited in Jörg, 2009). Over time, the “emergent” phenomena may become apparent as effects of self-generated, self-reinforcing, and self-sustainable processes. According to Jörg (2009), learning through human interaction should be seen as learning to know that understanding others demands awareness of human complexity.

Learning through human interaction would be marked by features such as openness, (self-) criticism, and the complexity of processes with its effects, which are fully interwoven. Through a web of reciprocal relationships, human beings can become nonlinear beings. This will only occur over time, as they became nonlinear through the incorporation of the nonlinear effects (Bai as cited in Jörg, 2009). This perspective once again emphasises the

fact that the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing in schools is a process and not an end in itself (Atkinson, 2013; Morrison, 2002).

A new reality with endless possibilities can be created in a child's mind by means of learning and education. This domain can be created as the effect of the never-ending connections of casual conversation and interaction, linked with casual events (Vygotsky as cited in Jörg, 2009). From this point of view, "not things or reality pushes the children's mind along the path of development. Reality is itself processed and transformed by the mind" (Vygotsky as cited in Jörg, 2009). In other words, according to Morgan (1997, as cited in Jörg, 2009) this thinking implies a fundamental "reversal of the usual relationship between reality and change" (p. 412). One first has to discover the dynamic cohesive components of the whole that embrace processes that provide the world be perceive to be reality. Through language, "reality" can be decided. Again, this type of reasoning emphasises the important role of interaction and relationships in education.

Jörg (2009) reasons that a new language should be invented for a new reality based on human communicative interaction within dynamic relationships. This type of innovation might open up the doors for a new perspective on learning and education. Suchlike creative opportunities might unleash the emergence of dynamic generatively processes. This is the new science of thinking in complexity about learning and education (Jörg 2009).

The views of Vygotsky (1981) and Jörg (2009) are important to leadership models and the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools. It is reasoned that unless all parties in the education system, including school leaders, understand the complexity of a dynamic and complex reality based on human communicative interaction within dynamic relationships, that relational wellbeing could not be promoted. The above discussion demonstrates the very

truth of Vygotsky's adage that "it is through others that we develop into ourselves" (Jörg, 2009).

2.4. Perspectives on the promotion of wellbeing

Investigators divide the concept of wellbeing that concerns optimal experience and functioning into two general perspectives. On the one hand, there is the hedonic approach that concerns itself with happiness, the presence of pleasure and absence of pain as conceptualised in subjective wellbeing literature. On the other hand, there is the eudaimonic approach relating to the realisation of human potential as reflected in the notions of psychological and social wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Negovan, 2010; Linley et al., 2009).

The hedonic or subjective perspective of wellbeing is described as an individuals' affective and cognitive judgement about their life satisfaction (Diener, Lucas & Oishi, 2005; Keyes et al., 2002). Keyes et al. (2002) define psychological wellbeing as one's perception of engagement and thriving, with regard to existential challenges of life. It includes aspects such as personal growth and purpose in life that reflect the self-fulfilment notion of the eudaimonic approach. However, there are also other components like self-acceptance and positive relationships with other. Keyes (1998) defines social wellbeing as "the appraisal of one's circumstance and functioning in society" (p. 122).

The eudaimonic or psychological perspective of wellbeing is concerned with the realisation of human potential. Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff (2002) define psychological wellbeing as one's perception of engagement and thriving with regards to the existential challenges of life, positive interpersonal relationships and self-acceptance. Ryff and Keyes (1995) proposed the following six dimensions of psychological wellbeing namely self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, and purpose in life,

personal growth, and autonomy. Although all these psychological dimensions of psychological wellbeing are applicable to this study, the dimension of relations with others is especially important. Ryff and Keyes (1995) describe psychological wellbeing in terms of high levels versus low levels. They maintain that high levels of positive relations refer to the existence of warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others (Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Keyes (1998) proposed a more socially orientated definition of wellbeing and most researchers agree with this even more multidimensional perspective. This approach included the subjective, psychological, and social dimension. From this, Keyes (1998) proposes an even more socially orientated definition of wellbeing, which can be indicative of an individual's level of functioning in the social world. It consists of the following five dimensions, which are very appropriate to this study on relational wellbeing. The first dimension is *social integration*, which entails an individual's perception of his or her perception of the quality of their relation with the community and society. The second dimension is *the feeling of being in a society, being valued, and of having something to offer*. The third is the dimension of *social acceptance*. This entails believe and trust in other people and humanity. The fourth dimension is the *hope of social actualisation and the potential of society to improve*. *Concluding* is the final perception of the world as stable and organised. The last dimension is *societal coherence* that is an awareness of the world as stable and organised.

According to Negovan (2010), psychological wellbeing includes mental, emotional, social, physical, economic, cultural, and spiritual health. Keyes (1998) defines social wellbeing as "the appraisal of one's circumstances and functioning in society" (p. 122). In concurrence with Negovan (2010) and Keyes (1998), Kelly (2006) mentions that social wellbeing, which involves a healthy socialisation process within the school environment, is pivotal in creating spaces where learners can learn to establish, maintain, and promote

healthy relationships. Thus, if the social wellbeing of children is explored and established, the efforts to promote relational wellbeing within the school environment can be promoted.

The afore-mentioned explanation by Keyes (1998) of social wellbeing fits in with Prilleltensky's approach to wellbeing as a multidimensional and holistic concept. The reasoning is that wellbeing is a positive state of affairs brought by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, relational, and collective needs. In the absence of any one of the components, wellbeing cannot be achieved (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2002; Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006). According to these authors, wellbeing is thus situated within individuals, and in organisations like schools and communities. The qualities of interpersonal, relational, and societal domains and not only personal perceptions of individuals are therefore emphasised.

Referring to Prilleltensky's (2005), holistic conceptualisation consists of three sites of wellbeing, discussed in more detail below:

- Individual or personal wellbeing

According to Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), individual wellbeing entails personal control, self-esteem, choice, competence, political rights, and a positive identity. For Keyes (1998), wellbeing on this level is the prominent presence of positive feelings over a lesser degree or presence of negative feelings (p.121). Watson (2012) extrapolates the negative feelings on the general positive and negative feelings. He mentions that individual wellbeing may be measured according to three specific domains: emotional: "happiness, confidence and not feeling depressed"; psychological: "feeling of autonomy, control over one's life, problem-solving skills, attentiveness, sense of involvement with others"; and social wellbeing: "good relationships with others, avoiding disruptive behaviour, delinquency, violence and bullying" (p. 2).

- Relational wellbeing

At a relational level, the individual needs to be embedded in “a network of positive and supportive relationships” (Prilleltensky, 2011:30). According to Prilleltensky (2005), signs of relational wellbeing in this network of relationships include caring, respect for diversity, reciprocity, nurturance and affection, support, collaboration and democratic participation in decision-making processes. Diener and Seligman (2004) emphasises the importance of relationships that are fulfilling and supportive in order to sustain wellbeing. McCubbin, Zhang, Kehl and Strom (2013:355), who define wellbeing as the extent to which the positive effects in a child’s life outweigh the negative effects, agree with Prilleltensky’s views on the importance of relational wellbeing. According to these authors, the relational nature of wellbeing encompasses the individual, family system, environment, community and the world as interdependent and relational, suggesting that wellbeing cannot be enhanced or even exist without the aforementioned constituents (McCubbin et al., 2013).

As stated before, Keyes et al. (2002) considers relational wellbeing – positive relations with others – as a component of psychological wellbeing in concurrence with Prilleltensky’s (2005) emphasis on the holistic and social components of relational wellbeing. Keyes (1998) also stresses the importance of relatedness in his conceptualisation of social wellbeing. Subjectivity and relatedness are fundamentally intertwined and relationships are therefore a feature of subjective wellbeing (Pugno, 2007; White, 2010). Diener and Seligman (2004) emphasises the importance of relationships that are fulfilling and supporting in order to sustain wellbeing.

- Collective wellbeing

Keyes (1998) states that although wellbeing is an individual feeling of growth and to some extent a “personal phenomenon”, individuals are unavoidably enmeshed in social systems and are therefore affected by the positive or negative functionality of these social

systems. From a holistic approach towards collective wellbeing, relational wellbeing mediates between individual and collective wellbeing (Prilleltensky, 2005). Wellbeing can only be achieved through the simultaneous balance between personal, relational, and collective needs in individuals, families, communities, macro-level structures and policies (Nelson and Prilleltensky, 2010). The conceptualisation of that wellbeing can only be achieved through a balance between personal, relational, and collective needs as explained and supported by community psychology and the ecosystemic approach. As stated before, the primary goal of community psychology is to promote people's wellbeing. The ecosystemic approach explains that the individual is part of many layers of the ecosystem.

The above discussion suggests that wellbeing is not only multidimensional, but also spans across multiple levels. Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006) proposed that the promotion of well-being should therefore go beyond the personal and intra-psychic, to include divergent solutions across different levels.

2.4.1. The promotion of relational wellbeing in school communities

In an extensive review of global research studies on the connection between the experience of school relationships and mental health in adolescents, McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) indicate that research need to be more relationally focussed and should take the complexity of the school institution into account, rather than being individualistic and programmatic as is often the case. Witmer (2005) asserts that collaboration and commitment is needed between all the stakeholders in the school community in order to build positive relationships. South African research on school climate also refers to the importance of relationships for the creation of an environment that is conducive of effective learning and teaching. Molemane (2000), emphasise that a web of caring relationships will contribute to a school climate which fosters school effectiveness. In other local research on school climate, supportive and inclusive school relationships are suggested as a means to create a non-violent

school climate (Barnes et al., 2012). Respectful, accepting and supportive relationships were also identified as contributing to a caring school environment (Weeks, 2008)

However, despite evidence in national and international research that relationships are critically important in schools, the pro-active promotion of relational wellbeing is not considered as a priority in school communities as suggested by Nelson and Prilleltensky (2010), White (2010) and McCubbin et al. (2013). In the South African context relationships are highlighted in the national evaluation of educators' competencies in the Integrated Quality Management Systems for School-Based Educators (Education Labour relations Council, 2003). Thus, the importance of relationships in school communities is not ignored, but policies and actions are not purposefully directed as specifically improving relationships and promoting relational wellbeing in South African school communities (Wagner, 2013). Yet according to Kitching (2010), relationships form the basis for the co-construction of enabling school communities, and suggest that all the members of a school community should be considered as sense-makers who take part in the patterning of enabling social spaces in which relational wellbeing is enhanced in the midst of the complexity of togetherness.

2.4.2. The complex, emergent nature of promoting relational wellbeing

Morrison (2002), from a complexity theory perspective, argues that schools can be viewed as complex, adaptive systems in which interactions between people on the multiple levels give rise to the behaviour of the system as a whole in non-linear, self-organising ways. The focus in addressing problems in schools should therefore be on the actual dynamic interactions between the people in the school context and not only on the behaviour of individuals.

Through active engagement, there is the potential for open dialogue between people of a school which can facilitate constructive change. According to Suchman (2002) this perspective does not allow for openness to change, flexibility and adaptability, but also creates an atmosphere and opportunity that enhances the importance of relational wellbeing.

Jörg (2009) illuminates on the development of patterns of conversation with his generated, self-reinforcing, self-sustaining causal processes (...) (p. 16).

The activities and progressive experiences of whole human beings in human communicative interaction, take place within and through their dynamic reciprocal relationships (Jörg, 2009). The emergence of new patterns of conversation is dependent on:

1. Responsiveness – participants must be aware of each other’s emotions and ideas to have that awareness influence on their responses.
2. Novelty – participants form new associations between themes.

The emergence of novelty is affected by the factor of diversity. The opportunity for new ideas is more likely when a variety of themes can be introduced into the conversation. Should everyone hold similar views the conversation will be free of conflict, but unlikely to produce new patterns of understanding and meaning (Suchman, 2002).

The value of the theory of complex responsive processes lies in the understanding of the interaction and development of relationships in a dynamic and complex organisation such as a school. The complexity theory also enables us to (a) regard schools from a dynamic rather than from a static perspective; (b) understand how schools adapt to external and internal contexts; and (c) find effective ways to benefit from individual creativity and

innovation within a school-wide framework (Sante Fe Centre for Emergent Strategies, as cited in Morrison, 2002).

Morrison (2002) argues that from a complexity theory perspective schools can be viewed as complex, adaptive systems in which interactions between people on multiple levels give rise to the behaviour of the system as a whole in nonlinear, self-organising ways. The focus in addressing problems in schools should therefore be on the actual dynamic interactions between the people in the school context and not only on the behaviour of individuals.

2.5. Perspectives on school leadership

As mentioned in Chapter 1, school leaders of the future need to become more sophisticated in their understanding of the complexity and the dynamic relational processes involved in human behaviour before relational wellbeing can be promoted. In this regard, there certainly seems to be limited research undertaken on the role of school leadership in addressing this complex challenge. Generally, it seems that past research on school leadership mainly focussed on sub-disciplines, such as school management or educational law.

There are numerous perspectives, approaches, and definitions of school leadership. Sergiovanni (1984) describes aspects of school leadership metaphorically as forces available to administrators, supervisors, and teachers as they influence the events in schooling. Robinson (as cited in Halvorsen & Skrovset, 2014) defines leadership as the processes of influencing others to act in ways that support the core objective of an organisation like a school (facilitating student learning).

In the context of this study, school leaders refer to all members of this particular school who hold any kind of leadership role ranging from the RCL, educators, and heads of departments, deputy principal, and principal. To gain a holistic view of the concept of school leadership it was considered important to include all members in a relevant leadership position in the research. This inclusion is important, as the focus of this study is the perspectives of “leaders” regarding the promotion of relational wellbeing at their school.

The inclusive concept of leadership in an effort to promote relational wellbeing of all members of a school is further informed by the concept of transformational leadership. This concept is found in Burns (1978) seminal publication, in which he views the purpose of leadership as the motivation of followers to work towards goals of a transcendental nature. He focuses more on the emotional aspects of followers and argues that transforming leadership “occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 20 as cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

During the past four decades, his views stimulated the development of transformational leadership theory and research. In this regard Bass and his associates provided the most fully developed body of work on this topic (e.g. Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1993 as cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). In contrast to Burn’s (1978) original view, it is argued that transformational leadership does not substitute interactional leadership, but that transformational behaviours augment the effects of transactional behaviours (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Instead of emphasising linear and reductionist processes of earlier theories of leadership, the focus of transformational leadership theory is on emotions and values, and on leaders’ experience of events in assisting followers as meaningful (Yukl as cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). This view is in line with Bowman’s (2014) opinion that the challenge for young leaders is not understanding the

practise of leadership, but practising their understanding of leadership in the everydayness of school life – “one conversation, one selfless act, one instructional activity, and one community-service project at a time” (p.63). This author reasons that leadership is learnable; guidance is no longer exclusively the prerogative of formal leaders. This view may create more potential for the promotion of relational wellbeing in schools.

2.5.1. A complexity perspective on school leadership

In concurrence with a more inclusive understanding of school leadership, the complexity perspective on school leadership (Morrison, 2002) emphasises the importance of relationships in the co-construction of schools as enabling spaces in which people can be well.

A complexity perspective legitimises the fact that leadership does not imply control over people but rather the acceptance of a lack of control (Streatfield as cited in Suchman, 2002) and a realisation that influence is more important, as indicated by Jörg (2009). According to the complex responsive processes of relating theory, an organisation, like a school, is not designed to any degree – it emerges at patterns of coherence from the interactions of all its participants (Suchman, 2002; Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). The complexity perspective thus focuses on less control, allow some disequilibrium and recognise the importance of relational processes (Stacey, 2007; Morrison, 2002; Suchman, 1998). The reduction of anxiety enhances awareness of context and relationships which fosters greater receptivity and openness towards changes (Suchman, 1998; 2002). It is therefore important that leaders must realize that complex adaptive systems such as schools is not in equilibrium but always function in the space between order and chaos – stability and change and that it is in these space that new ideas and innovations arise (Brown, 2011; Stacey, 2000; 2007; Davis & Sumara, 2001).

Due to complexity and uncertainty within organisations, it is therefore not possible for leaders to know and prescribe to others what to do. Ultimately it is the capacity of leaders to know that they don't know and to be open and allow them to open space for transformation and emergence in their organisations (Suchman, 2002). Instead members of an organisation like a school, often help leaders to find direction out of confusion and uncertainty (Brown, 2011).

Therefore, instead of consistently attempting to stabilize an organisation, trying to control or direct what happens, leaders must therefore rather influence behaviour through the management of networks and interactions. By the distribution of control and the allowance of non-linear communication and interaction to develop, a climate for emergence of new ideas and behaviour can be created.

Leadership that acknowledge complexity is about the process of fostering conditions in which new behaviour and directions of the school can emerge through regular, dynamic interaction (Suchman, 2002; Stacey, 2000; 2001; Wood & Butt, 2014). Control may be distributed for the allowance of non-linear communication and interaction to take place and develop. It is through the difference of ideas and opinions (disequilibrium) which can create the possibility of the emergence of new ideas, perspectives and actions. The core of the concept of emergence is a process where interaction in a system leads to change and the development of new ideas and actions (Wood & Butt, 2014). For the purpose of this study emergence is defined in a way where through more equal participation the people of this school bring on changes that can promote relational wellbeing.

The theory of complex responsive processes encourages careful attention to the patterns of communication and relationship. Careful note must be taken of how we are present in each moment and it should remind us that the most of what we think is "reality" is

actually reified social process that is created anew in each moment (Suchman, 2002). It is small changes in the initial conditions, as well as small changes in the environment that can propagate to become major changes (Bloch, 2005; Suchman, 2002). School leaders who embrace a complexity perspective, focus on these small changes and attempt to make sense of it (Plowman & Duchan as cited in Brown, 2011). They pay careful attention to patterns of communication and relationships and try to establish how these patterns present in each moment is basically reality which is actually reified social processes in each moment (Suchman, 2002).

In literature (Morrison, 2002) there is general consensus that effective leadership is inseparable from effective communication. In self-organising schools, as suggested by the theory of complex responsive processes non-linear communication and interaction is of utmost importance (Morrison, 2002). Communication keeps people informed and involved which are essential for self-organising schools. According to Malone (as cited in Morrison, 2002) the all-model of communication can accommodate the key characteristics of a self-organising school (flexibility, complexity, morale and organisation). Communication is just not a matter of data exchange, but also a relational matter. Morrison (2002) suggests that leaders must communicate in a dialogue illocutionary and comprehensive way, it must be trustful, legitimate and sincere. The free flow of information not only promotes positive relationships, understanding, a sense of belonging, but also suggests democracy and sharing. Ultimately it is in the capacity of leaders to not know and to be open to being changed. This will allow them to open space for transformation and emergence in the organisation (school).

From a complexity perspective, school leaders should therefore be encouraged to follow non-linear principles suggested by Brown, (2011), if they intend to contribute to the promotion of relational well-being in their school communities. The implication for practice is that school leaders should not attempt to control individuals or systems. They should

rather allow for interactive dynamics to contribute to the process of change through conversations between members of all levels of interrelatedness. They should furthermore encourage support, as support contributes to the interactive dynamics that can bring about positive change across a system.

One can only conclude with the views of Uhl-Bien & Marion (2009) that leadership is not much about identifying leaders, but rather to consider complexity leadership behaviour. These leaders must have the capacity to be open for change. This ability would allow them to open space for promoting relational well-being by changing the conversations about how people are together in school communities and how they can be well in the relational interactions in their school communities.

2.6. Summary

As explained in the introduction, this study has been approached from a community psychology perspective, with referral to eco-systemic principles in order to gain a better understanding and insight in the perception of leaders' perceptions of the promotion of relational wellbeing at their school. The realisation of the full complexity of human behaviour and its interrelating dynamic forces this however challenged some restrictive boundaries of the above systematic approach. Instead of focussing on one abstract systematic whole the focus should rather be shifted to complex interactive dynamics that are inherent within a system that shape members of the school and also have the potential to shape the system at the same time. This potential for change through relationships can only be utilised when the human interactions are understood within the context of unpredictability of the dynamic processes of non-linear communication and interaction (Stacey, 2007).

The complexity perspective allows for less control, allows some disequilibrium and also recognises the importance of relational processes (Stacey, 2007; Morrison, 2002).

Control must therefore be distributed for the allowance of non-linear communication and interaction to take place and develop. Complex leadership is therefore about a process of fostering conditions in which new behaviour and directions of the school can emerge through regular, dynamic relational interaction (Stacey, 2000; Wood & Butt, 2014; Morrison, 2002). With these conditions in place, a school can begin to develop its self-organising capacities. It is only through the creation of such an education and school environment through complex thinking that a “new reality” in education that is fully based on human communicative interacting within dynamic relationships can be created (Jörg, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

A brief discussion was given in Chapter 1 on the research design and methodology of the study. In this chapter, a more detailed presentation deals with the research paradigm, the context of the study, research methodology and design, data gathering techniques, analysis of data, trustworthiness, the research process that was followed, and the ethical considerations that was taken into account to ensure authenticity.

3.2. Research design and paradigm

The study was conducted from a social constructivist worldview typical of qualitative research and an interpretive paradigm (Creswell, 2009; Maree, 2010). From this perspective, individuals develop their subjective meanings of experiences into the formation of a sense or concept of their reality. Because the meanings are varied and multiple, it led the researcher to be on the look for the complexity of these individuals' views rather than for a few individual views (Creswell, 2009). The research study therefore attempted to provide as much freedom to the research process during this inquiry by allowing constructive progressive interaction amongst participants.

A paradigm is a structure or a set of assumptions or beliefs that outlines the way in which people observe and understand their social world (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). The research in this study was conducted from an interpretive paradigm aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content obtained from the data collection process (Maree, 2005), with the intention to explore the perceptions of leaders about relational wellbeing in a school context. According to Thomas (2009), the researcher will usually follow an interpretive

paradigm when he or she is interested in people and the way they interrelate with each other and how they form ideas about the world they live in.

According to Maree (2010) and Creswell (2009) the interpretive paradigm is based on the assumption that there is no one reality, but many. In this regard, although positively orientated, the questionnaire and structure of the working session were constructed in a way that allowed freedom of perspectives on the concept of relational wellbeing.

While conducting this study, the researcher thus kept the following interpretive assumptions indicated by Creswell (2009) in mind:

- Human beings construct meaning as they engage with the world-they are interpreting. The researcher used open-ended questionnaires to allow the participants to share their views on relational wellbeing in this context.
- Humans engage with their world and make sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives (Creswell, 2009). The researcher strived to obtain sufficient information about the perceptions of the participants through active engagement by means of working sessions.

The generation of meaning takes place through social interaction between people in a human community (Creswell, 2009). The researcher therefore-allowed for-sufficient interaction between participants to ensure that deep, rich data was generated.

3.3. Context of the study

This study focussed on analysing the participants' perceptions, attitudes, understanding, values, and experiences. Therefore, the investigation focused on the way individuals construct meaning to everyday events and explain the relevant events in their daily lives.

The context in which the research was conducted involved a secondary school community. The school is situated in a semi-urban area that faces serious psychosocial issues associated with grim socio-economic problems due to high unemployment rates in the area. Because the school is situated in a previously advantaged area, it is still considered as a Quintile 4 in terms of the categories for public schools in South Africa. The school thus qualifies as a fee-paying school, which means that parents are still obliged to pay school fees. However, due to the socio-economic situation many of the parents who cannot afford these fees apply for a subsidy from the school.

Amidst the socio-economic problems, the school system also struggles with disciplinary problems, bullying, cultural differences, violence, and a lack of engagement from parents and the community.

The table below shows how challenges are being addressed in the school under discussion:

Challenges	How the challenges are being addressed
Learners in need because of Poverty	Several learners at this school are affected by poverty. Support is provided by the school by means of a food packet during break each day. The school also provides food parcels to the families of these learners during holiday time. When parents are financially unable to afford a school uniform, the school provides the uniform donated by previous grade 12s.
Discipline problems Violence Bullying	Any type of behaviour relating to disciplinary problems, including violence or bullying, is addressed by a penalty system that can lead to detention.
Use of substances	When there is any suspicion of a learner using substances, for example dagga, the learner is tested at school. Should the result be positive a disciplinary hearing follows. Depending on the outcome, suitable disciplinary actions are taken.
Lack of engagement from Parents	The school continuously strives to keep the parents informed of what is happening at school via texting and letters. The school also have parent evenings in order to inform parents about their child's progress at school.

Table 3.1: *How challenges are being addressed*

The table below provides demographical information regarding the specific school under examination.

DEMOGRAPHICAL DETAILS	SITUATED IN A RURAL AREA WHERE ECONOMIC SURVIVAL IS BASED ON INDUSTRIES SUCH AS MINING
NUMBER OF LEARNERS ENROLLED IN THE SCHOOL	970 learners Distribution across grades: GR 8 – 233 GR 9 – 202 GR 10 – 241 GR 11 – 162 GR 12 – 132
NUMBER OF TEACHERS	44 white teachers 35 female and 9 male
ETHNIC GROUPS	Black, coloured and white learners 96% black, 3% white and 1% coloured
LANGUAGE	Dual medium 95% English and 5% Afrikaans

Table 3.2: Demographical information of the school being studied

3.4. Research design and methodology

According to Creswell (2009), a research design involves the worldviews, strategies, and methods that tend to be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. The research in this study was qualitative in nature. With qualitative research, researchers attempt to place themselves in the world of the participants, allowing them to see the world through the lens of the participants (Flick, 2007). Anderson (2006) adds that qualitative research is more subjective

than quantitative research in which a researcher can use a variety of methods to collect information.

An instrumental case study design was selected for the study in an attempt to gain a better understanding of school leaders' perception on relational wellbeing at their school. A case-study design is usually used when a particular phenomenon is studied and a collection of in-depth and detailed data is needed (Maree, 2010; Creswell, 2009).

3.5. Participants

All the members who play a leadership role in the particular secondary school were invited to take part in this study. This heterogeneous group of 30 participants included the principal, deputy principals, and heads of departments, educators and the representative council of learners (RCL).

3.6. Data gathering

The data for this study was gathered in two consecutive phases. An appreciative inquiry (AI) approach was applied to collect the data in both phases. First, the principles of the AI approach were used to compile a questionnaire and thereafter the AI approach was applied in a working session with all the participants. According to Hall & Hammond (2008), appreciative inquiry is a way of thinking that contributes to powerful, purposeful change in organisations. Whitney & Trosten-Bloom (1999) defines the method of an appreciative inquiry as the study "of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best" (p.7). This type of inquiry focuses on the principles of "positivity" and "generativity capacity" (Bushe, 2010; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999) and is based on the assumption that people, groups and organisations have the capacity, resources and strengths to give life and energy to a system (Hall & Hammond, 2008). It occurs when a group of people discovers and creates new ideas and provokes new actions. Spontaneous, unsupervised, individual group and organisational action towards a better future is generated.

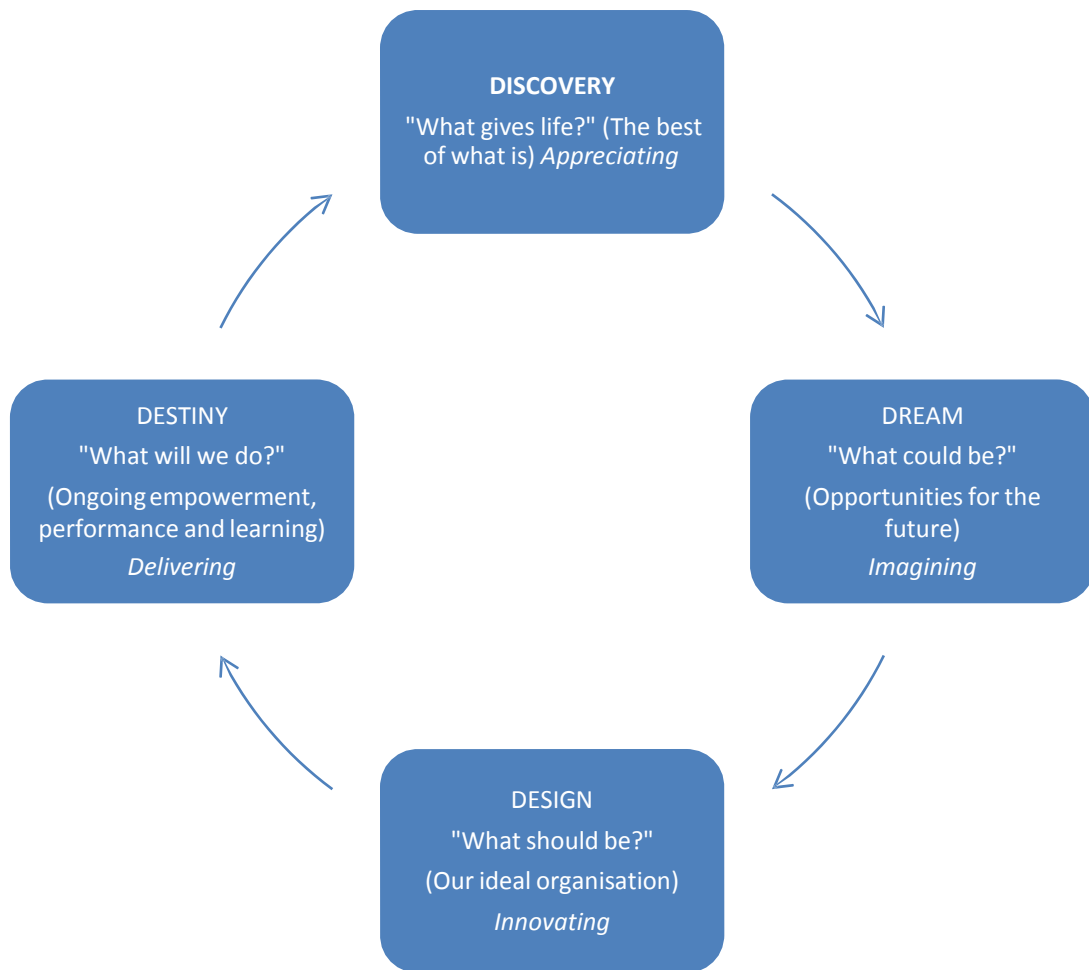
The focus is on changing how people think and on supporting self-organising change processes that flow from new ideas (Bushe, 2010).

Hall & Hammond (2008) mentions the following assumptions that Appreciative Inquiry is based upon:

1. In every society, organisation, or group something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions from an organisation or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey into the future (the unknown) when they carry forward parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be the best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality.

The participants were taken through the classic phases of the AI inquiry process that include discovery, dream, design, and destiny. The 4-D cycle is used to guide conversations with participants on a whole-system change effort. It can also serve as a framework for personal development or organisational development (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999). Whatever the purpose, the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D cycle approach serves as the foundation on which change is built. Each phase of the 4-D cycle of Appreciative inquiry is subsequently discussed.

Diagram 3.1: Appreciative Inquiry



Adapted from Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999.

Discovery

Discovery is an extensive, cooperative search to understand the “best of what is and what has been” (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999). Discovery involves purposefully positive conversations among many participants of an organisation to determine a detailed description for the discovery phase. The discovery process usually results in a rich description of the organisation’s positive essentials and the organisation sharing stories of best practices and actions (Whitney & Trosten-bloom, 1999).

Dream

Dream refers to what might be. In this phase participants explore the hopes and dreams for their organisation as well as the relationships with the people in the relevant organisation (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999). They look beyond what has been to envision better results and contributions to the organisation.

Design

During the design phase, participants give statements describing the ideal organisation – or how it should be (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999). These statements expand the organisation's image of itself and the way things will be.

Destiny

Destiny contains inspired actions that support what will be. The destiny phase specifically focuses on the participants' commitments on the path forward (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 1999). According to Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (1999), appreciative inquiry becomes the framework for leadership and on-going organisational development.

All 30 participants completed a *qualitative open-ended questionnaire* in Phase 1 to enable the researcher to explore each participant's perception of the promotion of relational wellbeing in their school. The open-ended questionnaire included eight open-ended questions, which covered the four areas of appreciative inquiry, namely discovery, dreams, design, and destiny. This appreciative inquiry is based on the model of Browne (1999).

In the diagram below the open-ended questions included in the questionnaire is presented in relation to the four dimensional cycles.

AI PHASE	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
<p>1. Discovery</p> <p>Mobilising a whole system inquiry into the positive change core (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Perceptions and experiences of school leaders on the present relational wellbeing in this particular school.</p>	<p>1.1. What was your most rewarding experience of promoting relational wellbeing at your school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please describe what happened and who was involved. • Why was it so significant and meaningful? <p>1.2. What was the most significant initiative undertaken by leaders at your school in promoting relational wellbeing ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who was involved and what happened? • Which factors contributed mostly to the success of this effort? • Why was it satisfying and what did you learn from it?
<p>2. Dream</p> <p>Creating a clear results-orientated vision in relation to discovered potential and in relation to discovered potential in relation to questions of higher purpose (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Visions of optimum relational wellbeing in this school.</p>	<p>2.1. What difference do you think the promotion of relational wellbeing can make in the school community?</p> <p>2.2. How do you imagine this school community, when relational wellbeing is functioning at optimal levels?</p>
<p>3. Design</p> <p>Creating possibility propositions of the ideal organisation (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Design initiative through dialogue: an exploration of these leaders' perceptions of principles</p>	<p>3.1. What needs to happen to enhance relational wellbeing in your school community?</p> <p>3.2. What is needed from policy and programmes on local and national level</p>

<p>and ideas on relational wellbeing.</p>	<p>to ensure relational wellbeing at your school?</p> <p>3.3 What will inspire you as a leader to continue with your efforts in promoting relational wellbeing?</p>
<p>4. Destiny</p> <p>Strengthening the affirmative capacity of the whole system enabling it to build hope and momentum around a deep purpose and creating processes for learning, adjustment, and improvisation (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). The identification of immediate and future actions, which can initiate the dream towards optimal relational wellbeing at this school.</p>	<p>4.1. Please write down a few possible ideas on how to further promote relational wellbeing at your school community.</p> <p>4.2. In your opinion, what support and resources are needed to promote of relational wellbeing at your school in the school community?</p>

Table 3.3: Open-ended questionnaire

As stated before, the above phases of AI inquiry was used to compile a questionnaire consisting of qualitative open-ended questions. This questionnaire was completed towards the end of 2013 and shortly thereafter processed for application to the study at hand. The information gathered with the qualitative open-ended questionnaires was then analysed to identify possible themes from the data based on the perceptions of the participants.

In Phase 2, the research conducted entailed one working session with the participants to obtain a deeper understanding of their current and envisioned perceptions of the promotion

of wellbeing. Selection was voluntary for all school members in leadership positions and school management was kind enough to release all the participants from their duties during the day of 4 November 2013. The study started at 9:00 and continued until 12:00. The work session was conducted in the school hall and represented the following population of school leaders:

RCL Representative Council of Learners	18
Educators	7
Heads of departments	5

Table 3.4: *Work session*

It was unfortunate that senior leadership did not participate in the study. These members were also rather passive during the working session in the sense that they did not strongly assert their views. The few members of the leadership team that did participate were of the younger generation and more open-minded and flexible. Without doubt, one can accept that their mere presence might have restricted some participants' spontaneous verbal participation. This problem will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of the discussion.

The same questions used in the open-ended questionnaire served to structure the discussion. Debate was encouraged and the researcher allowed conflicting viewpoints to emerge, as suggested by Maree (2010), to ensure that all participants' perspectives were obtained. The researcher chose a work session as a method in this study. This approach

overtly allowed participants to build on each other's ideas and comments to ensure rich data with new and different perspectives.

After concluding the data gathering process, the researcher presented the final themes to a heterogeneous group of participants selected from each of the groupings to conduct member checks before the results were reported. Eleven participants were selected for the member check as set out below:

- open-ended questionnaires 6 participants
- working session 5 participants

3.7. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis in this study was an ongoing and reiterative process as explained by Nieuwenhuis (2007). The data from the first phase was analysed by applying thematic analysis. According to Maree (2010), thematic analysis involves the method of identifying, analysing, and reporting on themes gathered from data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) there are several questions the researcher should ask towards the end of the thematic analysis process when a clear sense of the thematic map was determined. These questions are as follows: What does the theme mean? What is the assumption underpinning it? Why do people talk about it in this particular way (as opposed to another way)? What do the different themes reveal about the topic?

Braun and Clarke (2006) also warn about the following pitfalls that should be avoided:

- Failure to actually analyse the data
- Using the data collection questions as “themes” that are reported
- A weak or unconvincing analysis, where the themes do not appear to work, when there is too much overlap between themes

-
- Where there is a mismatch between data and analytic claims, because this cannot be supported by data
 - A mismatch between research, the research question, and the form of thematic analysis needed.

The researcher familiarised herself with the data gathered by using the open-ended questionnaires. Subsequently the researcher interpreted and coded the data by means of related written words corresponding to the researcher's interpretation. By applying codes, the researcher could identify possible themes that arose from the data.

During the working session, the researcher made an audio tape of all discussions throughout the work session. Thereafter the researcher transcribed the interview, and assigned codes to the responses obtained in the interview. Like in the first phase of the analysing process, the researcher identified possible themes that the researcher discussed with the supervisor before finalising the selection.

3.8. Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) a qualitative study must be trustworthy to be able to convince readers that the findings are suitable for a specific study field. In this study, trustworthiness was ensured by way of crystallisation. When various types of data, methods, researchers, and theoretical frameworks are used, crystallisation is ensured because it provides an in-depth description of the phenomena studied (Tracy, 2010).

The following criteria from Tracy (2010) was adapted and implemented in this study to ensure that the study is trustworthy by way of crystallisation:

- The researcher made use an *open-ended questionnaire* and a *work session* to gather data, which provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny (Nieuwenhuys, 2007). The data obtained was also recorded by using

two different mediums namely written text (open-ended questionnaires) and an audio version of the working session. Multiple theoretical perspectives were used (Chapter 2) to ensure crystallisation. Different facets of the problem could thus be explored for a profound understanding of the phenomena, which in turn generate accurate interpretation (Tracy, 2010).

- Multivocality was applied by allowing various perspectives on the phenomenon. According to Lincoln & Guba, 1985) multivocality includes listening to opinions that differ from one's own to enable one to study "multiple constructed realities" (page number required). In this study multivocality was ensured by including voices of the RCLs, educators, heads of departments, the principal, deputy principals and the SBST. By using written, open-ended questionnaires, all participants could express themselves freely without the fear of being judged.
- The findings were also supervised and reviewed by the supervisor to ensure that the various perspectives were well integrated and presented in a realistic manner (Creswell, 2009).
- Tracy (2010) emphasises the importance of a "tick-description" of the phenomena studied because "... any single behaviour or interaction, when divorced from its context, could mean any number of things" (p. 843). Credibility was thus enhanced by in-depth descriptions of the research context, methodology, and findings that will enable other researchers to gain deeper understanding of the phenomena, reproduce this study in a similar context, and yield similar results in the future.
- To avoid generalisation as far as possible, the researcher attempted to focus merely on the responses of participants. From an interpretive paradigm, the aim of this study was only to provide a description of perceptions and not to generalise it to any other school or community.

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- According to Tracy (2010), trustworthiness of a study goes hand in hand with the followed ethical procedures. Thus, the researcher acted ethically at all times and ensured that procedural and situational ethics where adhere to.
 - Lastly, Babbie and Mouton (2001) explain that conformability can be achieved through reflexivity. Reflection and introspection during the study minimised personal bias and enabled the researcher to guard against the possibility of prejudiced assumptions influencing the outcomes of the research in any way.

To ensure added reliability of data the following statement of Maxwell (as cited in Maree, 2010), seems to be appropriate, "...validity is not an inherent property of a particular method, but pertains to the data, accounts or conclusions reached by using that method in a particular context for a particular purpose" (p. 284). Therefore, the data cannot be biased, but the conclusion and possible interferences drawn from the data may well be. In this regard, the researcher strived to produce findings of a believable and convincing nature. Despite using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach that primarily focus on the positive, the negative and paradoxical findings were also taken into consideration to add to the credibility of the study.

3.9. Ethical considerations

According to Maree & Van der Westhuizen (2009), ethical considerations are considered the most important element in any research study. Thus, the researcher strived to act ethically at all times based on the values stipulated by the Constitution of South Africa (1993). Formal consent was obtained from the NWU research committee before conducting this research. All participants voluntary participated in this study. Therefore, confidentiality and anonymity were essential prerequisites for participants to feel at ease.

3.9.1. Informed consent

All participants as well as the RCL's parents were thoroughly informed about the extent of this study before the study was launched. All participants were clearly informed via

written text of the purpose of the study; rationale of the study; aim of the study; identity of the researcher and supervisor; and that confidentiality and anonymity will be assured at all time. Before this study was launched in the school, necessary consent forms were handed out to all adult participants partaking in this study (Addendum C). The following aspects (Creswell, 2009) were discussed in writing on the consent forms:

- The purpose of the study and why the participant was selected for this study.
- Procedures of the study and what the participant could expect while the study were conducted.
- The measures that will be taken by the researcher to ensure that confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained.
- Reassurance that the participant can withdraw from the study at any given time.
- The right to ask questions during the study at any given time.

3.9.2. Partial confidentiality and anonymity

Only partial confidentiality was possible due to the sharing of personal views and information during the working session. Allen (2011) notes that this confidentiality regulates the extent to which information shared with the researcher should be kept confidential. Thus, any information that is contained during the data gathering process *must* be handled as confidential information.

During the research procedure, the researcher followed a specific procedure to ensure that all the data documents were secure at all times and the identity of participants respected in the process (Rubin & Babbie, 2009). Because researchers emphasise the importance of the protection of participants' identity, all personal data such as names, roles, and status were changed so that inferences to participants become impossible (Flick, 2000; Maree, 2010; Allen, 2011). Thus, codes were assigned to the school and participants. The researcher made

sure that all the questionnaires were destroyed immediately after completion of the research process. This procedure ensured the protection of participants' identities.

3.9.3. Dignity

When research is conducted the researcher must respect the dignity of participants, such as their reputation, psychological and physical integrity, and their uniqueness (Allen, 2011). In this manner, the researcher communicates respect for the actions and language of the participants. To ensure the dignity of the participants in this study the researcher took their time into consideration. The researcher also phrased the questions in a language that the participant understood in order to treat them with the utmost respect.

3.9.4. Feedback to participants

It is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to inform the participants of the findings after the research has been conducted. The findings will be combined in a document that will be presented to the participants. According to Bless et al. (2006), the researcher must pay special attention to the language and culture of the participants. The researcher will thus present the findings to every participant in an informal manner, mostly in English and Afrikaans.

It is vital to note that no data or findings were manipulated in any way. The researcher had regular contact with the supervisor of this study to ensure that all ethical standards of a Master's degree were upheld at all times.

3.10. Summary

In this chapter, the research design and methodology were discussed. The researcher conducted this study according to the standards of a Master's degree. The case study research design allowed the researcher to use qualitative gathering methods to explore the

perceptions of school leaders regarding relational wellbeing. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis and during the course of conducting this study, all ethical standards were upheld at all times.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1. Introduction

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. The diagram below gives an overview of the themes and subthemes that were identified in response to the research question: *How do school leaders’ perceptions of current and anticipated practices inform our understanding of the promotion of relational wellbeing?* To answer the research question the results obtained from this study will be discussed with reference to three themes as indicated below:

THEME I	THEME II	THEME III
The current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community	Envisaging the school community as a space of optimal relational wellbeing	Facilitating optimal relational wellbeing in the school community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in activities that connect the members of the school community • Crossing boundaries to reach out to marginalised members of the school community • Facilitate opportunities to address concerns and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school community as a caring and supportive place for all • The school community as a harmonious and secure space • The school community as a creative inspiring space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-actively enhance awareness of relational wellbeing • Facilitate opportunities to connect • Enhance collaboration on multiple levels • Facilitate collaboration across all levels of interrelatedness

Table 4.1: Themes and subthemes

4.2. THEME 1

The current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community

The data for this theme was obtained from the first phase of the appreciative inquiry aimed at gathering data that could assist the group to discover ways in which they are already promoting relational wellbeing in their school community. Participants were therefore invited to share stories and tell about events and interactions that they perceived as promoting relational wellbeing. In this process, they also provided data that assisted the researcher to identify ways in which relational wellbeing is restrained in these contexts.

4.2.1 Subtheme 1.1

Involvement in activities that connect the members of the school community

The participants identified various activities that allow the members of the school community to connect with one another and develop a sense of belonging in their school community.

The participants gave specific examples of such activities. Table 4.2 comprises of a verbatim description by participants of the activities identified, as well as a description of what each encompassed, and who was involved.

ACTIVITY	WHAT DOES IT ENCOMPASS	WHO WAS INVOLVED
Harvest aid	<i>OEQ-P1= The harvest aid donates food parcels each year to the homeless, orphans and the old age home people living in the nearby community. Our principal and teachers also did their part to encourage us to bring copper pennies and food to school.</i>	<i>OEQ-P7= It is our teachers' passion to help learners, not only academically. Our teachers took on the initiative to get these sponsors to donate maize for our less fortunate learners.</i>

	<p><i>OEQ-P7 = Different organisations from the immediate community came together to donate 50 kg of maize to less fortunate learners. The teachers collected names of learners that are in desperate need of food so the maize could be distributed.</i></p>	<p><i>WS-P7= People from the community came and gave our school 50 kg of maize for less fortunate learners in our school.</i></p> <p><i>OEQ-P7= All the learners in the school, the teachers and different organisations of the community are involved in the harvest aid.</i></p>
Chess	<p><i>WS-P6 = It was a chess tournament at our school where we competed against other schools. We as learners compete with other learners from other schools. Our teachers and the teachers from the other schools all motivated us and taught us different techniques that we can use playing chess.</i></p>	<p><i>WS-P6= We as learners compete with other learners from other schools. Our teachers and the teachers from the other schools all motivated us and taught us different techniques that we can use playing chess.</i></p>
Cleaning project	<p><i>OEQ-P8 = Cleaning project – We help our environment to stay clean for health purposes. We take some time to give back to our environment and community.</i></p> <p><i>WS-P8= We as learners identify the areas in our town that needs to be cleaned. We as learners then work together and go every Friday afternoon to clean that specific area</i></p>	<p><i>WS-P8 = Learners participate willingly and clean the town every Friday afternoon. Sponsors out of the community give us cleaning materials such as brooms, bins etc. These papers get recycled.</i></p>
Inter-high athletics	<p><i>OEQ-P4 = Inter High happens each year where some schools come together and participate in the athletics and sing songs.</i></p>	<p><i>WS-P4= Junior and senior learners – black and white work together as a team despite their differences to win the singing trophy.</i></p>
Class concert	<p><i>OEQ-P2= Competition where classes need to work together to compose and present a song and dance to the rest of the school on stage. The judges from the community pick the best two classes and give them a reward (Movie + Hamburgers). It involves all the</i></p>	<p><i>Concert between classes.</i></p>

	<i>register classes with their teachers and judges from the community.</i>	
Christmas carol	<i>WS-P10= Every year we as a school have a Christmas carol were the whole school sings carols together and donate food and presents for less fortunate people during Christmas.</i>	<i>OEQ-P10 = When we have our yearly Christmas carol, each and every learner joins in and sing Christmas carols.</i>
RCL Camp	<i>OEQ-P5 = RCL camp – Got to know each other on another level. It also helped us to understand the vision of our teachers better. We were told how to respect each other despite our differences + had motivational speeches how to be a leader</i>	<i>WS-P5= The RCL camp is where all the new elected RCL"s come together for a weekend to get to know each other better.</i>
Spring walk	<i>OEQ-P11 = Spring walk – All the learners and teachers of the school walk together around the school on Spring day. We can wear casual clothes and afterwards we have a small concert were learners and teachers can perform their talents.</i>	<i>WS-P11= All the learners and teachers of the school walk together around the school on Spring day.</i>
Assemblies	<i>OEQ-P16 = Different pastors come to our school every Monday for assembly and give us a message for the week ahead.</i>	<i>WS-P9 = Assembly on Monday mornings were the whole school comes together and we are being inspired to achieve.</i>

Table 4.2: Overview of activities

This extended table includes a variety of different activities that covers a wide range of opportunities for participation and interaction between members of the school community. Almost all the participants experienced these events and activities as meaningful and essential to the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing at their school. Several participants were of the opinion that even more opportunities could be created.

From a perspective of relational wellbeing, the significance of these activities lies in the unifying and cohesive forces. With reference to the harvest aid, one participant described the significance of the event as follows:

OEQ-P1= It had sentimental value and required us to open our hearts and minds. We are almost like superheroes because we make others smile- we bring hope to these people's lives and make them feel loved. It also does not only help those who are less fortunate but also blesses the hands who give. Anyone can be part of this project and make a change with what they have. When you give, you feel spiritually healed. We as a school unite – we believe in sharing.

A sense of inclusion, belongingness, and collectiveness were also derived from participation in activities. Even more important is the fact that the activities require and entail connection, communication, and interaction between participating members, which implies the formation of some kind of relationship with one another. In this regard, the class concert serves as an example:

OEQ-P2 = Learners in each class get to know each other better and build a relationship between each other. New friends are made. It also makes all the classmates equal and able to interact with each other and discovering hidden talents of peers.

Opportunities created by the school for its members to come together, communicate and share stories can have a unifying effect and a positive psychological impact on participants. This opinion is illustrated by the following comment:

WS-P6 = A girl told us about her background. She came from a broken family but she still worked hard and made it in life. This camp told us how to work together as a team no matter your background – we had the chance to get to know each other better. This camp was meaningful because not only I got to think about life, but it left all the RCL members in deep thoughts.

It is also important to note that this collective participation crosses boundaries in the sense that teachers and members, as well as teachers from other schools are also involved in these activities:

WS-P6 = I also believe it makes a difference in our relationships with fellow pupils and with pupils from other schools and academically.

OEQ-P6 = Our teachers and the teachers from the other schools all motivated us and taught us different techniques that we can use playing chess.

The most striking feature in the data was participants' loving care and support towards the community. Their engagement in activities that focussed on promoting wellbeing in their community seemed to be close to their hearts:

WS-P1 = It had sentimental value and required us to open our hearts and minds. We are almost like superheroes because we make others smile- we bring hope to these people's lives and make them feel loved. It also does not only help those who are less fortunate but also blesses the hands who give. Anyone can be part of this project and make a change with what they have. When you give, you feel spiritually healed. We as a school unite – we believe in sharing.

The emotional and psychological reward of promoting general wellbeing, but in particular relational wellbeing, is observable. The holistic perspective and approach to the promotion of relational wellbeing is reflected in participants' natural perception of the concept of wellbeing that is inseparable from the community. The following response supports this reasoning:

OEQ-P8 = Cleaning project – We help our environment to stay clean for health purposes. We take some time to give back to our environment and community.

Participants clearly indicated through their responses that the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing is a collective effort from members of the school and community:

OEQ-P7 = Our teachers took on the initiative to get these sponsors to donate maize for our less fortunate learners.

OEQ-P8 = Sponsors out of the community give us cleaning materials such as brooms, bins etc. These papers get recycled – recycling project at school.

WS-P7 = Different organisations from the immediate community came together to donate 50kg of maize to less fortunate learners. The teachers collected names of learners that is in desperate need of food, so that the maize can be distributed.

OEQ-P2 = It involves all the register classes with their teachers and judges from the community.

OEQ-P8 = Junior and senior learners – black and white work together as a team despite their differences to win the singing trophy.

There was consensus amongst participants that active participation in activities with all its potential nurturing qualities would restrain negative and antisocial behaviour in their school. Referring to the dance concert, one participant made the following comment:

WS-P2 = We will learn to understand each other better, respect each other and communicate better with each other. This will limit fights and arguments in the school. Especially between the different races in the school. Learners will follow the school rules.

From the above responses, it is clear that participants placed a high value on events during which they can participate in some sort of an activity. Participants experienced these activities as meaningful and significant, because it gave them a sense of inclusion, belonging, and collectiveness:

OEQ-P10 = Christmas carols – It brings us together because at the end we show that we don't only care about ourselves but we also care about the people around us.

Within an atmosphere of engagement and participation, a sense of achievement and pride were derived, which further contributed to this sense of belonging and cohesion. This coherence enabled members of this school community to cross barriers of status, culture, and race, enabling them to connect with one another and function together as a unit.

The significant impact of merely getting involved in activities is demonstrated in the following responses that indicate the changes that some participants indicated in themselves:

WS-P19 = Yes it is. Mam I used to smoke a lot and I used to call myself a Rasta. But now, since I came across Mr Y, he took me to play rugby for the club with him.

WS-R = So he motivated you to go and play rugby and that kept you out of trouble?

WS-P20 = Mam rugby also changed my life, I was a skinny guy and so little and one of my friends and Mr Y took me to the gym and now I have muscles etc.

From the perspective of the promotion of relational wellbeing, it is important to realise that members communicate, interact, and form relationships during the engagements. Another feature in the responses during the discovery phase were the willingness amongst participants to also interact and cooperate with the community which is an important feature in the holistic nature of relational wellbeing promotion.

As discussed, the Appreciative Inquiry approach (paragraph 3.6) does allow for the observation of some negative factors, although it is not the primary focus of the approach. Within a complex system like a school, one can expect to find members who do not only observe the enabling nature of the school activities, but also identified some restraining factors in attempt to enhance and promote relational wellbeing.

Several participants were frustrated by some members' disengagement and unwillingness to make an effort in becoming involved and participate in school activities:

WS-P12 = Mam I think the majority of the learners are not really interested because it doesn't matter if it is sport or choir; they are just not doing anything. Mrs Y organised that movie day and almost everybody did not pitch and complained about the money. Ok I understand the money because we are not all financially empowered, but look at this thing – How many of our grade 11's did not come, how many of them are using money as an excuse to not come.

Such behaviour is certainly against the spirit of attempts to enhance and promote relational wellbeing. Members that behave in this manner exclude themselves from the

opportunity to develop a sense of community towards their school and create division instead of unity.

Although the majority of participants were appreciative about the encouragement and support they received from teachers, some participants mentioned problems in this area. One participant referred to the lack of encouragement and responsibility during the cleaning-up project by making the following statement:

WS-P5 = Not a single teacher, not even the teacher who initiative the whole thing, came to us and asked guys why don't you clean up? So somewhere it seems like people don't care. I recognise a problem there because when you start something you must see to it that it is followed through because if the teacher who started the initiative does not do something the learners will also not do anything.

Clearly, this perception of the participant not only refers to a lack of encouragement but also to the lack of cooperation and shared responsibility that undoubtedly influence relationships negatively. The real danger of this type of non-involvement is that it sends the message, "If you do not care, why should we care?" This passive-aggressive attitude certainly constrains continued engagement and cooperation.

It seems there were numerous interactive activities and events available to members. However, they were not in great demand. Several participants complained that the development and expression of their creative cultural talents in particular were not accommodated in the curriculum, which could explain the lack of interest and participation.

4.2.2. Subtheme 1.2

Crossing boundaries to reach out to marginalized members of the school community

Despite the risk involved, the data suggests that several learners in the school are willing to engage with marginalised learners to contribute to relational wellbeing. The following wonderful story shared by one of the participants illustrates this statement:

WS-P2 = There is this other Afrikaans girl in grade 10. Every time I see her she is sitting alone on the stairs in the grey block. So I was going up the stairs to the toilet and asked her why she is always sitting alone and things like that. She said that the girls here at school are mean to her and they are always just doing their own things and no one really cares about her and she does not really fit in anywhere. So then I kind of spoke to her for about ten minutes. About a week later I saw her coming from the English class with another learner. This was something new for her because I have never seen her with anyone else. I knew she was a really cool person but no one really understand her. Here at the school the majority of us all have friends so we don't know if other have friends or not or if they are happy or not because we are just doing our own thing. You are just being crazy with your friends and you don't really consider other people. I decided to go and talk to her because she was sitting alone. That's what happened.

The participant noticed this girl from a different cultural group. She perceives her as being isolated from relationships, not accepted and integrated into the school community. The participant then decides to reach out (connect) in an empathetic and caring manner. The girl's positive response to this caring contact seemingly allows her to feel secure enough to share her problems with the participant. She tells the participant that she feels unaccepted and excluded due to relational problems with her peers. She elaborates and explains that she is experiencing emotional abuse and rejection from her peers who are not willing to reach out and attempt to know and understand her. It is very probable that this positive caring contact with the participant convinced her there might be other caring members in the school. Therefore, it could be worth the risk to reach out, connect, and form new relationships. The crossing of boundaries and interaction between these two learners clearly had a favourable

outcome and presents an excellent example of how relational wellbeing can be enhanced by the actions of individual members of the school community amidst actions that restrain relational wellbeing.

Another example that illustrates the willingness to cross boundaries by respecting cultural diversity indicated that some teachers in the school acted in a respectful manner towards learners who are from another cultural background by asking their advice regarding a cultural day. She also provided clothes for those learners who would not be able to get clothes for the day in question:

WS-P14 = Our class was pretty organised because we got along very well with our teacher. We could also contribute ideas. Although she is an Afrikaans teacher, she came to us and asked us what we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it. She even let us dress up in our cultural clothes and for those who did not have any cultural clothes, she brought some for them. So I think it is because of her that we managed to work so good together. She did not try to control us. She did not say guys do this or do that although we did not agree with some of her ideas because of the age gap and not because she is crazy or anything.

This teacher did not attempt to dictate and control members in her class. She allowed nonlinear communication and interaction, which earned her the learners' respect and established collaboration. Through her actions and attitude she was able to establish good relationships with the members in her class.

The participants also presented evidence indicating that some members of the school community are willing to reach out on group level across boundaries. The following response from the focus group clearly indicated how two groups, namely the minority of white learners and the black learners started to reach out to one another to overcome the divide between them:

WS-P53 = I think mam that black learners and white learners have to come together. Not like we sit during break time. I always communicate well with the white learners because I do not chance who I am when I am with them. They can see I am legit.

Another example where the crossing of boundaries can lead to engagement, establishment of relationships and unity is illustrated by the following comment of a participant:

WS-P54 = Like the club (rugby club) where I play, there is like 7 black people and the surrounding is mostly white but they treat us like their own kids – the club owners everyone, the players they take care of us. I think it's time that we black people should open up to white people.

Evidently, a strong sense of community develops between members when they reach out to one another. The responses given by participants under this subtheme indicated that there are specific efforts to cross the boundaries of diversity in a caring, supportive, and respectful manner. The powerful impact that the crossing of boundaries has on the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing indicates the importance of such positive behaviour.

As stated before, a complex system like a school will not always be in equilibrium; disturbing forces will always form part of such a system. Although the AI inquiry focuses constantly on the positive, several restraining factors arose. In paradox to the previous example of how relational wellbeing is promoted by crossing boundaries, the following observation of a teacher shows how unwillingness to cross boundaries can lead to exclusion that is undoubtedly not beneficial to the promotion of relational wellbeing:

WS-T1 = I would just like to add that I observed that in my class. The first thing is that black learners tend to speak in their home language and white learners do not understand it. In my grade 10 classes I only have 3 white learners and they are in three different classes. The opportunity for them to be part of the class is none

existing because the groups go into their own corners and speak in their home language. So this learner cannot communicate with them because they don't understand them.

In-group identification seemingly causes disengagement and estrangement between members of a school that is restraining to enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing.

4.2.3. Subtheme 1.3

Facilitate opportunities to address concerns and needs

The participants indicated that various opportunities to address their concerns and needs were facilitated at the school. They view this situation as a favourable way in which relational wellbeing is currently promoted in the school community. They gave the following examples of such opportunities. Certain important lifestyle issues were addressed on an educational level. One example of such a project was the Rape Wise Project:

WS-P15 = Rape Wise project - Dr B comes to our school every now and then to talk to us about different topics. What happened was that he had questions about our bodies and he taught us things we did not know. All the learners took part in this discussion with him and with each other.

Despite the educational value of such projects, it is also important to note that it created an opportunity for the members during which discussions and interactions between themselves and with this influential person in society were made possible. A similar opportunity is created when role models come to school to give motivational speeches:

WS-P3= A member from parliament (J Dt) came to our school. He gave us a motivational speech and told us to never give up no matter what our circumstances are. When Jarred gave his speech, it was a stage in my life where I felt like giving up and letting everything go. (J Dt's) speech gave me power to go on.

From the data, it was clear that several participants experienced these speeches as inspirational and meaningful. Undoubtedly, an urgent need for role models is evident between participants, and may possibly exist among all members of the school.

OEQ-P3 = Many of us have problems at home – he helped us to focus on our education and told us that we can be better than our circumstances if we work hard. This motivational speech came at the right time in my life where I needed someone to lift me up and he really did. (J Dt) created opportunities for himself in life and made us believe that we can succeed in everything that we take on.

The above-mentioned comment again illustrates the important role people from outside the school system can play in the upliftment and inspiration of young people. This reflects the interdependency between systems and the importance of a holistic perspective towards wellbeing.

Another example of how members needs and concerns can be met is illustrated in the following response:

OEQ-P14= When one of my teachers helped me with preparations for the exams – I am grateful and will always be. One of the old staff members at my school who cares for every student in our school, helped me prepare for my upcoming exams.

There can be little doubt that this caring teacher's willingness to render academic support to members in the school was much appreciated. Therefore, her attitude and active involvement were instrumental in establishing respect and good relationships.

The above-mentioned two examples of educational and motivational speeches illustrate the interaction between the school and community/society. Another example of an opportunity where needs and concerns between the two systems is illustrated by the following response:

WS-P1 = All of the learners in the school, the teachers and different organisations of the community are involved with the harvest aid. The harvest aid donates food parcels each year to the homeless, orphans and the old age home people living in the nearby community. Our principal and teachers also do his part to encourage us to bring copper pennies and food to school.

Not only do the projects initiated by the school address the needs of people in the community, but also it would appear members of the school are concerned about their community, hence the manifestation of their altruistic feelings.

Responses from participants supportive of this subtheme can be summarised and categorised into the following three levels of relational wellbeing enhancement and promotion on a collective and holistic level.

Relational wellbeing on a **personal level** focuses on educational and inspirational input from role models whose expertise in their field can most probably contribute to the improvement of the personal wellbeing of a member. Even stories by motivational speakers about their personal history appeared to have had a significant and meaningful impact on the perceptions on life and wellbeing among most participants. The fact that the majority of participants value these inputs highly is possibly indicative of a strong need for guidance and advice (informational support).

Relational wellbeing on an **interpersonal level** refers to instrumental support that includes the provision of assistance in the form of time, skills, and services; in other words, concrete actions by members of this school to help others. From the responses, it is clear how much this caring support is appreciated and how powerful its impact is on the enhancement and promotion of relationships between the particular members.

Relational wellbeing on a **community level** refers to the interdependence and interaction between systems essential to the holistic perspective and approach towards relational wellbeing. The holistic approach is reflected in the way that the school as a united system (learners, teachers, and principal) reached out in support of the less fortunate members in the community. This involvement, support, and interaction are considered an essential ingredient for the successful enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing.

With reference to restraints associated with opportunities to address concerns and needs, members were extremely discouraged when significant members who initiated some projects to enhance and promote relational wellbeing seemed to lose interest. This dejection was evident in the following response:

WS-P5 = Yes because we gather after school to clean up together and it was nice to see our principle going into the dustbins and taking out rubbish with his bare hands, but after a few weeks it all stopped. I don't know if it's a lack of consistency from our learners or if our teachers are not doing enough to motivate us.

Such disengaging behaviour is certainly against the spirit of an approach that enhances and promotes relational wellbeing. Members that behave in this manner exclude themselves from the opportunity to develop a sense of community in their school. As a result, they create division instead of unity.

Furthermore, although the majority of participants were appreciative about the encouragement and support they received from teachers it became obvious that some participants identified problems in this area. One participant referred to the lack of encouragement and responsibility during the cleaning-up project by making the following statement:

WS-P5 = Not a single teacher, not even the teacher who initiated the whole thing, came to us and asked guys why don't you clean up? So somewhere it seems like people don't care. I recognise a problem there because when you start something you must see to it that it is followed through because if the teacher who started the initiative does not do something the learners will also not do anything.

It seems there were numerous interactive activities and events available to members. However, they were not in great demand. Several participants complained that the development and expression of their creative cultural talents in particular were not accommodated in the curriculum, which could explain the lack of interest and participation.

This perception not only refers to a lack of encouragement, but also to the lack of cooperation and shared responsibility, which certainly negatively affect relationships.

4.2.4. Integrative discussion of Theme 1

The first subtheme clearly illustrates that participants perceive participation in school activities as an essential element in the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing in the school. It was encouraging to notice that a variety of activities was available to learners in which they can participate and the general excitement and pleasure they obtained being part of the action. Baumeister & Leary (1995) argue that both the need to belong and the desire for interpersonal relationships are fundamental human motives. According to these authors, human beings thus have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum amount of lasting, positive, and significant relationships. One of the criteria involved in satisfying this drive is the opportunity for frequent personal contact or interaction with others, relatively free from conflict and negative effects, within a framework conducive to positive or pleasant relationships. The engagement and participation of school members in the previously discussed activities seemingly provide the opportunity for the development of relationships and a sense of belonging. Members' participation in school activities not only create a sense of belonging and community but also improve self-esteem (Ma, 2003). Self-esteem is the single most important predictor of a sense of belonging with consistent effects (Fine 1991, as cited in Ma, 2003).

However, low self-esteem or doubt about one's abilities may alienate one from participation in school activities. Alienation may be the major reason students lack a sense of belonging to a school. The relationship between self-esteem and a sense of belonging may be reciprocal with each enhancing the other (Fine as cited in Ma, 2003).

The results support previous research indicating that collective engagement and participation in activities develop a sense of community amongst members of a school. What makes this finding meaningful in the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing is that a sense of community negatively correlates with social isolation, loneliness, antisocial behaviour, but is positively related to happiness, improved caring and social skills, academic achievement and safety in the classroom (Pretty et al., as cited in Vieno et. al., 2005)

This engagement and dynamic interaction between members create opportunities to form relationships with one another. When all this come together, a sense of belonging and community is achieved. According to McLaughlin and Clarke (2010), the power of the concepts of engagements and connectivity cannot be underestimated. Connection between members in schools is the driving force in shaping engagement with the school.

According to Keyes (1998), healthy individuals feel that they are a part of society. Social integration is the extent to which people feel they have something in common with others who constitute their social reality, for example, their community, as well as the degree to which they feel that they belong to their communities and society. In this regard, estrangement is the rejection of society or the realisation that society does not reflect one's own values and lifestyle.

Holistic wellbeing is paramount to collective wellbeing, as relational wellbeing mediates between individual and collective wellbeing (Prilleltensky, 2005). A holistic approach to the promotion of individual and collective wellbeing is therefore paramount in order to establish healthy relationships.

The relationship between the school as an institution and the community can further be understood by taking notice of the values of caring, compassion, and support for community structures. It also involves empathy and concern for the welfare of others

(Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). The sense of belonging and community can thus be considered as a value that generally enhances relational wellbeing.

The second subtheme suggests that relational wellbeing is currently enhanced in instances where people are willing to reach out and engage in a caring and supportive manner in any possible way, despite their diversity. Boundaries between status, language, age, culture, and ethnicity have to be crossed. Unless a positive attitude and willingness motivate people to reach out to one another despite their diversity, a division that is the breeding ground for isolation, division, discrimination, and conflict will always be present. Within such an atmosphere, it would be impossible to enhance and promote relational wellbeing.

The input of role models and educational talks from members of the community was considered as significant and valuable. Yet again, these interactions, input, and support between systems emphasise the interdependence between systems and the importance of interactions

Within a complex system like a school, it is impossible to imagine that some members will not also take notice of restraining factors in the effort to enhance and promote relational wellbeing. As discussed in the literature search of this study, the equilibrium of an organisation like a school can be distributed by forces within (Brown, 2011; Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). As already mentioned, these so-called “negative” forces should be considered as potentially positive and constructive, because healthy systems do not always operate at equilibrium; at times they will be unstable (Stacey, 2001; Brown, 2011). It is in this time zone between stability and change that new ideas and innovations emerge.

The complexity theory allows for disequilibrium and paradox. It is therefore not surprising that complex, dynamic processes include enabling and disabling patterns of relating and interactivity (Kitching, 2010). In the co-construction endeavours both these

paradoxical phenomena should be considered as natural in the same temporal spaces (Radford as cited in Kitching, 2010).

Restraining factors noted in this study included lack of sustainability of projects aimed at the promotion of relational wellbeing, members' disengagement from school activities, and lack of support, encouragement and recognition in an effort to promote relational wellbeing.

4.3 THEME 2

Envisaging the school community as a space where relational wellbeing is optimised

The data for this theme was obtained during the dream and design phase of the Appreciative Inquiry process. The participants were invited to explore their hopes and dreams for relational wellbeing at the school under discussion. Dreams refer to what may be if optimal levels of relational wellbeing were achieved. During this phase of inquiry, participants explore the hopes and dreams they have for their school once this objective is realized (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Participants were expected to envision a school where relational wellbeing not only leads to personal happiness but also contributes to the organisation as a whole (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The participants indicated that when relational wellbeing is optimised, the school would be a space where people care and support one another, where there is harmony between members that leads to security as well as a creative, inspiring space.

4.3.1 Subtheme 2.1

The school community as a caring and supportive place for all

During the AI inquiry, the participants argued that when relational wellbeing is optimised in their school communities, the school would be a space where people care about

and support each other. They compared this envisioned space with the experience of having a caring family. Several comments, positive and negative, were made to illustrate this comparison. Some participants referred to teachers who could be father or mother figures in their lives:

WS-P32= Because I get along with all the teachers that have taught me like Mr Y working with the RCL"s – he is like a father to us. He is such a humorous person and he always makes jokes, he is so accommodating. And Mrs X is also like our mother.

Others suggested that teachers should treat the learners in a way parents would treat their own children, as confirmed in the statements below:

WS-P29 = We as learners saw our teachers as our parents and learners as their children, there will not be anything where someone needs to scream all the way to the stairs – "You better hurry to my class", because I know that „mom" is waiting at the door and I need to be there in time. So if there were a mother-daughter and father-son relationship, we would not have to worry.

In this regard, there is no doubt that there is a general need amongst participants to be accepted by caring role models that represent a family system. The data suggest that many members in this school have been deprived of nurturing, loving, and supportive relationships in their life and wish for the school to be some kind of family substitute that can satisfy their emotional needs and prepare them to be able to deal with life's challenges:

OEQ-P3 = It can help more learners move beyond their circumstances at home (change of mind set) and be better people in society. We will grow into a well groomed community.

What is also very interesting is the emphasis on the need to care and support the less privileged in the community. This could possibly be related to a better understanding of suffering due to own experiences or it could even be an indication of a cultural phenomenon that is less focussed on individualistic egocentrism.

4.3.2. Subtheme 2.2

The school community as a harmonious and secure space

The participants argued that when relational wellbeing is optimised the school would become a space in which there is harmony and less fear for people's safety. They envisaged the school as "a big boat sailing smoothly in the sea, with no storms or big waves".

Participants were in full agreement that a school offering harmony and security to members would make a significant and meaningful contribution towards relational wellbeing. In such a harmonious and secure space, members would feel free, and would have the time to communicate, listen, understand, and respect one another:

OEQ-P2 = We will learn to understand each other better, respect each other and communicate better with each other.

Such a climate would not only improve relationships between learners and teachers, but also between different races:

OEQ-P3 = A place where everyone care for each other. Love is shown more openly to each other. There will also be mutual respect between learners and teachers.

There would also be mutual respect between learners and teachers and especially between the different races in the school. Another participant was of the opinion that the improvement of relationships between members would encourage cooperation to the benefit of the community:

WS-P4 = When relational wellbeing is promoted – relationships between learners and teacher will be improved (Ubuntu). When the relationship between the teachers and learners improve, we can all work together at school and community projects. There will be less conflict between learners and teachers.

OEQ-P2 = Fights and bullying between learners will not take place as frequently.

When relationships between teachers and learners improve, members can all work together at school and community projects. Relationships promote unity amongst members, which has the potential for powerful and constructive actions within the school and community.

Another factor identified by participants that would come into play in a school functioning at optimal levels of relational wellbeing in which harmony and security prevails, is the freedom to be oneself to express individuality knowing that one would still be accepted and respected without having to fear ridicule or rejection:

WS-P49 = No learner will sit in class without understanding fully the work. Like I said, they are too afraid to ask. My dream is for everyone to have a fair chance. For Mrs B to be able to answer each and every learner's question in the class. Because learner F is sitting there and is shy, but she can still ask a question without anybody saying anything.

Probably the most significant implication of such a harmonious and secure school community is that it would limit the risk of conflict between the members and allow them to collaborate in a harmonious way. Participants supported their reasoning in this regard by the following responses, to mention a few:

WS-P13 = Relational wellbeing will help learners from our school to participate in school activities instead of bad things like violence and gangs.

OEQ-P14 = We will be able to work together to fight crime in schools, gangsters and misbehaviours towards school teacher.

All the participants envisioned their “dream school” as a harmonious, caring, and supportive space where the necessary security prevailed. They would want to attend a school where relational wellbeing was at optimal levels, knowing they would be accepted, loved, and cared for. The atmosphere created by the nurturing climate will allow them to feel free and to be themselves without any fear of being ridiculed and victimised. Some participants

implicated that their envisioned school will create a safe haven in which they can rise above their circumstances and form relationships that enabled them to show compassion towards others.

Without exception, participants agreed that their envisioned school would be one where they felt safe and where they could interact favourably with their fellow learners. Moreover, they believed that there would be fewer behavioural problems adversely affecting harmony.

4.3.3 Subtheme 2.1

The school community as a creative inspiring space

This theme refers to the envisioned school as a space that creates energy and flow by means of opportunities for self-actualisation. Participants mostly agreed that all learners in the school would be inspired, excited, and energised by the prospect of their envisioned “dream” school where relational wellbeing functioned at an optimal level. They were of the opinion that a school that functions at an optimal level of relational wellbeing would generate a constant flow of positive energy:

OEQ-P13 = Learners will have positive energy and thus higher energy levels amongst students in school.

Some participants believed that positive energy would enable members of the school community to rise above their circumstances and will prepare and equip them with skills to become well-adjusted and productive citizens:

OEQ-P3 = It can help more learners move beyond their circumstances at home (change of mind set) and be better people in society. We will grow into a well groomed community.

In conjunction with the above opinion, two other participants acknowledged the nurturing and enabling effect of a school that functions at optimal levels of relational wellbeing on members' academic achievements:

OEQ-P6 = Learner's marks will be improved (higher passing rate) because relational wellbeing will make it easier for teachers to educate learners in class and learner's attitude will change towards the teachers.

EX 8 = The main aim of the school will be academics. All the learners will do good in their academics and we as school will have a higher pass rates.

If all these positive attributes of a school functioning at optimal levels of relational wellbeing comes together, it could undoubtedly be a space that allows members to reach their full potential:

OEQ-P1 = A place where dreams come true and where creativity and individuality gets embraced.

Participants' vision of a school community as a creative space in which relational wellbeing was at optimal levels strengthened their resolve/hope of rising above their disadvantaged position to create a better future for themselves.

4.3.4 Integrative discussion of Theme 2

Based on subtheme 2.1 it was evident that the participants associated a school in which relational wellbeing is optimised by a loving and caring family system. Some participants in this study perceived teacher support as particular important to make them feel accepted in the school community and created a sense of belonging. Significant figures in the school system were often referred to as "father" and "mother" figures. The results therefore indicated that schools could be important spaces during adolescence, because this period involved the development of aspects of personal identity distinct from parents, non-familiar peers, and significant adult figures like educators (Vieno et al., 2005).

Learners from impoverished situations might even have a greater need for care and nurture in their school community. In this sense, schools might complement the care and support provided by families. In cases where such care and support are lacking, the school could provide some kind of substitute for familial support. According to Ma (2003), care and support provided by the school is conducive to the development of a positive sense of belonging. Greater happiness, and better social skills, coping mechanisms, social support, intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, academic self-efficiency as well as adherence to democratic norms and values are associated with a sense of belonging in a school (Vieno et. al., 2005). Indeed, members of a school functioning at optimal levels of relational wellbeing will experience a high level of sense of belonging, would show respect for one another; therefore more altruistic and pro-social behaviour can be expected (Vieno, et. al., 2005).

Subtheme 2 emphasised the importance of harmony and security as an indicator for relational wellbeing. Relationships are important in the creation of a caring school environment where all the members can feel safe. Schools should be safe places that provide opportunities for the development and improvement of learners' interpersonal skills, respect and sensitivity to others (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006). In this regard, Kitching (2010) describes it as a cycle entailing a process of connecting with one another, caring for one another, communicating with one another, and respecting one another. Through such positive and ideally affective interaction, relational wellbeing will not only be enhanced, but the risk of interpersonal and behavioural problems should be reduced.

Envisioning a "dream" school that functions at optimal levels of relational wellbeing created an atmosphere of excitement and energy amongst participants. This change in mood could probably be associated with the terms "flow" and "positive affectivity" used in positive psychology. In an environment like this learners would feel absorbed by the activities and

will therefore be more able to experience intense positive experiences through the fact that they are in harmony and feel secure (Terjesen et. al., 2004).

4.4. THEME 3

Facilitating optimal relational wellbeing in the school community

The data for this theme was obtained from the destiny phase of the Appreciative Inquiry process. This phase is focuses on strengthening the affirmative capacity of the whole system enabling it to build hope and momentum around a deep purpose and creating processes for learning, adjustment, and improvisation (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Therefore, the identification of immediate and future actions that can initiate the dream towards optimal relational wellbeing at this school were explored during this phase. The findings are reported with reference to two subthemes:

4.4.1 Subtheme 3.1

Pro-active promotion of relational wellbeing

Participants were of the opinion that not enough is being done to create awareness of relational wellbeing and the promotion of the concept of relational wellbeing. To confirm this statement the following responses from a participant seems to be appropriate:

WS-P16 = Our school should have a motto in which we can all work towards. This motto can remind learners continuously to keep on promoting relational wellbeing.

The importance of this comment is conveyed by the acknowledgement that the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing is a process that requires continues attention and action. Several participants also suggested that it is essentially not just a marketing exercise, but also rather an educational process:

OEQ-P2 = More programmes in schools must focus on relationships – Learners need to learn more about their fellow learners culture and background so that we can understand each other better.

WS-P19 = We should have workshops on relational wellbeing so that learners can learn more about the impact it has on us.

On a more practical level, several ideas on the marketing of the concept were suggested. The following statement is a good summary of perceptions on this exercise:

OEQ-P7 = Programmes and policies must be available for learners so that they can get more information of what is going on in the school. Publicity – Make posters so that everyone know what the policies and programmes are about.”

An awareness of the promotion of relational wellbeing should constantly be propagated. It is vital that this awareness must become part of the vision and mission of this school. Without such constant awareness, it is unlikely that relational wellbeing would be promoted.

4.4.2. Subtheme 3.2

Create opportunities to connect with one another

The above-mentioned topic has been given considerable prominence in the discussion of AI inquiry. The importance is confirmed by the value participants place on opportunities that enable them to connect with one another in order to promote relational wellbeing at their school.

Participants suggested that in order to facilitate and promote relational wellbeing, more team-building exercises might be helpful. The following response is illustrative of this suggestion:

OEQ-P1 = More team building exercises / activities for learners to take part in as a group are needed for relational wellbeing to be promoted in our school. The school should also have subjects like drama, art and music so that learners can express themselves in different ways.

However, some participants were of the opinion that their particular needs, for example opportunities for cultural expression through art, were not accommodated in school activities. These problems should be addressed during the meetings as suggested in this section.

Such creativity and expression could bring about a better understanding of the individual and cultural diversity among members of the school. Without such insight, it could be challenging to cross boundaries and collaborate effectively in an effort to enhance and promote relational wellbeing.

It was even suggested that participation of members in activities should be made compulsory:

OEQ-P9 = All the learners have to take part in at least one activity at school. There are many learners who do not take part in any activities.

Communication can be considered as the essential element that enables members to connect with others to establish relationships. In the findings of the study, communication was discussed in tandem with connectedness and not as a separate sub-theme. Participants realised that communication and interaction between all parties involved were necessary for the development of new ideas and plans. Unquestionably, the different parties would not always agree. However, individual opinions could set the tone for ideas and changes to emerge.

Participants suggested in-house meetings during which learners can debate important issues concerning the promotion of relational wellbeing at their school as a group:

OEQ-P6 = We should have group discussions more often to share views so that we can hear different people's opinions about certain issues. In this way relational wellbeing will be promoted.

Needs, ideas, and values would have to be communicated in a nonlinear manner.

Democratic participation would be necessary in order to make sound decisions:

WS-P69 = Maybe every Friday afternoon a group of learners, who are interested in the wellbeing of the school, must come together in a class, and just speak about the way forward and then go and discuss it with the principal. Yes I've done it and it works. And if he does not approve it, he has reasons why. He will not say no because you are boring him, he has reasons why. And if he really sees potential in your concept, he will agree with it and then you can build it into bigger things.

It was evident that very few participants emphasised the importance of this nonlinear line of democratic communication and that those who showed enough insight and courage approached it in a very cautious and subordinate manner.

4.4.3. Subtheme 3.3

Enhance collaboration on multiple levels

This subtheme reflects participants' view that unless collaboration is facilitated on all levels in a holistic and collective effort to promote relational wellbeing at their school this objective is unlikely to succeed. It is suggested that members of the school take the initiative to interact with the community:

OEQ-P8 = The community should support the programmes and policies so that everyone is willing to lend a hand to make these programmes and policies a success.

Participants are also convinced that interaction and collaboration with other structures on a meso-level are needed to unify approaches:

WS-P9 = Join forces with the municipality so that the school can get the support that is needed. There should be better communication between the local and national levels."

WS-P11 = To see us as leaders working closer with people in higher places to change our community and make it a better place

WS-P3 = The department need to open a place in each town that assist learners with problems; The department should come out and visit the school every three months and motivate the learners – they can also be connected with learners via sms.

4.4.4 Integrative discussion of Theme 3

Atkinson (2013) argues that wellbeing should be seen as a process rather than a desirable objective. Thus, members of a school have to realise the promotion of relational wellbeing promotion is not a matter of compiling a random list of ideas with a plan of action, but a continuous proses of developing new strategies and actions. In this regard, leadership is an inherently dynamic, evolving process (Bowman, 2014). Hence, members of a school have to find ways to sustain the promotion of relational wellbeing.

Firstly, participants indicated that as far as they were concerned, there was not enough awareness of the concept “relational wellbeing” at their school. In order to enhance and promote relational wellbeing, they were of the opinion that an educational process *must* be initiated to create an awareness of the importance and value of relational wellbeing. Additionally, a more direct marketing strategy of the concept through several media was also suggested.

Secondly, participants were of the opinion that connectedness and engagement were critical factors in order to promote relational wellbeing. They suggested that more team-building exercises and perhaps a greater variety of activities, for example, creative activities, should be considered to address the needs of all members of the school. The concept of “community development” refers to the idea that change is more likely to occur when the whole school community develops and shares a vision about plans and goals (Crown, 2012). Participants felt so strongly about the participation of all school members in events and

activities in order to address the problem of disengagement they even suggested that participation in at least one activity should be compulsory.

The essence of the sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing includes regular connections and communication with all people, systems, and institutions that might be able to contribute toward the effort to sustain relational wellbeing at the school. Communication and regular contact involved all members of the school, namely teachers, the headmaster, the community, the municipality, and the education department. The all-model of communication can accommodate the key characteristics of a self-organising school, that is, flexibility, complexity, morale, and organisation (Morrison, 2002). Leaders must communicate in a dialogue illocutionary and comprehensive way; it must be trustful, legitimate, and sincere. The free flow of information not only promotes positive relationships, understanding, and a sense of belonging, but also suggests democracy and sharing (Morrison, 2002). Through the medium of communication and dialogue, all members are provided the opportunity to be heard. By means of conversation, members of school communities are better able to identify ways of relating and interacting that can contribute to enable school communities (Kitching, 2010).

Connectedness implies relationships between individuals and teams, between teams, between subsystems, and between the institution and its environment (Lewin & Regine, 2000 as cited in Morrison, 2002). In this regard, the participants realised that sustaining the promotion of relational wellbeing would involve a holistic and more democratic approach in which all possible role players collaborate with one another. The holistic interconnectedness and dependency between systems must be recognised and applied to the whole person, the whole community, and the whole wider context, because each fragment contains information about the whole (Prilleltensky, 2005; Prilleltensky, Nelson & Peirson, 1997).

Throughout this study, participants emphasised the important role of community involvement. The community as well as members from the broader society – role models and motivational speakers – would also make an essential contribution through their involvement to enhance and promote relational wellbeing in the school. Participants also suggested that in order to facilitate such a collaborative approach, the rigid, bureaucratic and controlling structures needs to be addressed in order to open doors for this nonlinear contact communication and interaction between all parties.

In this study, only one participant suggested that the path to the sustainable enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing should primarily be addressed by means of nonlinear communication and interaction within the internal school system. The cautious and respectful manner in which this particular respondent suggested learners should approach the principal about new ideas and initiatives is noteworthy. From this observation, it seems fair to reason that nonlinear emergent ideas and behaviours are not common practice at this school. It further suggests that members of this school might be used to a system of authoritative control, where rigid rules and regulations are common practise.

From a complexity perspective, the principal of the school should encourage and implement the innovative ideas and nonlinear behavioural approach to promote relational wellbeing in this school. The focus should ideally be on the dynamics of nonlinear interactions that have the potential for self-organisation and do not require intention or direction (Stacey, 2007). It must be kept in mind that the emergence of novelty is affected by the factor of diversity. There is a greater opportunity for the emergence of new ideas when a variety of themes can be introduced into conversation. Should everyone hold similar views, the conversation will be free of conflict, but unlikely to produce new patterns of understanding and meaning (Suchman, 2002).

A sense of community will increase in a democratic self-organising school environment. This is because members are enabled and encouraged to participate in decision-making. Learners enjoy freedom of expression, they can participate in regulative matters, organise events, and even address the fairness of rules and the conduct of teachers (Vieno et. al., 2007). No doubt, participation and collaboration on this level and in such a learning environment would contribute to a sense of responsibility and belonging.

Although this matter of participation and collaboration could be the most challenging obstacle on the road to communality, it is undoubtedly necessary for the creation of a democratic working atmosphere. It is only in a leaning environment where needs, ideas, and values can be freely communicated in a nonlinear way that sound decisions will emerge. A diversity of ideas and opinions generate the possibility for new ideas and perspectives (Wood & Butt, 2014).

A holistic approach with continuous communication and collaboration on all levels are suggested to facilitate the sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing in the school community. The holistic approach towards the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing was also well illustrated in the importance participants attached to community-orientated activities and projects. In this regard, Evans & Prilleltensky (2007) describe wellbeing as embedded in the core principles of community psychology that focus on people in their social context. On a relational level, wellbeing refers to individuals that form part of a network of supportive and positive relationships, and in which individuals play an active role (Evans & Prilleltensky, 2007). In this study, participants emphasised the importance of their supportive and constructive relationships with their community, which include aspects such as caring, collaboration, and reciprocity.

4.5. Brief summary of findings

From the preliminary discussion of the findings, it seems that the school under study provides a variety of opportunities to their members for engagement and interaction. Only a few participants were of the opinion that their individual needs and cultural identity were not fully represented and accommodated in the existing activities. From a complexity perspective, one could expect that all members would not always agree.

What is particularly important about the availability of opportunities whereby learners can engage and interact is the perspective that a school should be seen as a multidimensional and dynamic system. The implication is that the survival of a learning institution is dependent on the development of constructive relationships in order to ensure flexibility and adjustment. The dynamics of resilience, favourable change, and progress, as well as the current position of and attitude toward relational wellbeing at this school will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

One can also conclude from the findings that all the participants long for and are in need of a “dream” school, that is, a safe learning environment conducive to the development of harmonious relationships. In such an envisioned school, learners could maintain nurturing relationships that will enhance a sense of belonging and community. Several participants perceived such a school as an environment in which they can mature into respected individuals, develop their interpersonal skills, and enhance their education. A school with a vision and mission of optimal relational wellbeing, although only a wished-for notion, inspire confidence to realise their objectives of maturing into well-adjusted, productive individuals in society.

Although there seemed to be a limited awareness and understanding of the concept of relational wellbeing and its promotion in a school environment, it was encouraging to notice

early signs of an emergence of ideas through which relational wellbeing could be promoted in a sustainable manner at this school. In this regard, participants suggested a focus on engagement, conversation, and dynamic interaction between school members within a system that allows such nonlinear freedom.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The study is concluded in this chapter with a brief overview of the research process which will be followed by conclusion from findings. In this chapter the strengths and limitations of the study will be indicated, with appropriate suggestions and recommendations to practise and research.

5.2. Focus of the research

The research focused primarily on the understanding how school leaders perceive the current and proposed stances of relational wellbeing. It is reasoned that relational wellbeing can be generated by the numerous interactions that occur every day in a school to create trust, foster mutual respect and promote mutual support and collaboration (Roffey, 2008). Based on relevant and related research literature it is argued that schools need to shift from an individualist approach to addressing current challenges. Schools need to substitute a relationship focused approach that consider the complexity of human interaction and value the promotion of relational wellbeing. The proposed interactive and value orientated approach will go a long way towards the desired state of relational wellbeing.

The rationale for specifically focusing on the perceptions of school leaders understood as all adults and learners who fill a leadership position in the school, is that they are considered as people who have an influence on the interactive dynamics in their school communities due to their position. They could therefore play a significant role in bringing about the shift towards valuing relational well-being. Yet limited research was found on the perceptions of school leaders on relational wellbeing in South African school communities

The perception of school leaders on the promotion of relational wellbeing was explored by applying an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach.

The following research questions were asked in the effort to contribute to the body of knowledge aimed at understanding and addressing the perceptions of school leaders on the promotion of relational wellbeing.

Primary Question: How does school leaders' perceptions of current and anticipated practices inform our understanding of the promotion of relational wellbeing?

Subsequent Questions:

- What does school leaders perceive as practices that currently contribute to the promotion of relational well-being in their school communities?
- What does school leaders perceive as practices that needs to be implemented to promote relational well-being in their school communities?

To answer these questions a qualitative case study research design was applied, in combination with an appreciative inquiry approach.

The findings were disseminated with reference to the perception of these school leaders on enabling ways of relating and interacting that would enhance and promote relational wellbeing at their school. Where appropriate, reference was also made to perceived disabling ways of relating and interacting.

The findings on the perceptions of relational wellbeing at their school were reported with reference to three main themes:

- The current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community

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- Envisaging the school community as a space of optimal relational wellbeing
 - Conceptualising ways to facilitate the sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing in the school community.

With reference to the *current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community*, the subthemes indicated different, but interconnected sets of interactions between the members of the school community. Involvement in activities that connect members with one another seemed a priority. The crossing of boundaries to reach out to marginalised members of the school community to address concerns and needs was proof of learners' search for a sense of community.

With reference to *envisaging the school community as a space of optimal relational wellbeing*, participants held out the prospect of their learning environment as a caring and supportive space. They saw harmony and security in their dream school as a prerequisite for the development of creativity and personal growth.

With reference to conceptualising ways to facilitate the sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing in the school communities participants suggested that more opportunities to connect with one another must be created. They felt that communication and collaboration must be enhance and facilitated to optimise relational wellbeing.

5.3. Conclusions of the study

The conclusions drawn from this investigation should not and cannot be perceived as absolute due to the explorative nature of the study. The conclusions therefore only provide; tentative guidelines for practice and future research

5.3.1. Conclusions with reference to the current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community.

The findings of this study provide evidence to the fact that the members of this school are fortunate enough to be exposed to a variety of activities and events in which they can choose to partake. The majority of members of this school seem to participate, only as spectators during an event like the Inter-high athletics. Evidently, the members enjoy their participation and consider these opportunities provided by the school as constructive and important to promote connectedness; and interaction amongst people.

The significance of the participation in activities and events lies in the opportunity for members to relate and interact among themselves and with other people of different schools and communities. This engagement and interaction with others are extremely important in the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing at this school. Perhaps the most important finding is that it seems that participants generally agree that participation in school activities may be the key to their sense of belonging to school that pro-actively contributes to the promotion of relational wellbeing at the school.

However, some members from the traditional African culture that were of the opinion that their individual talents and cultural background were not fully acknowledged in the organising of activities and events. Care must be taken that cultural diversity and background are not overlooked and overpowered by a Western orientated framework. School activities, thus have to acknowledge and affirm all members' different cultures and backgrounds.

A few members of the school community, according to the participants disengage themselves from these activities and events. The exact reasons for such behaviours is unknown, but based on information obtained during the discussion it can be speculated that withdrawal from activities may be indicative of some emotional psychological problems:

passive aggressive behaviour or in some cases, financial restrictions. According to those in leadership positions, refraining from participation has negative implications for those members' own psychological wellbeing because it deprive them from the opportunity to engage with other and enhance a sense of belonging. Disengagement between members of a school community is a significant restraining factor for relational wellbeing.

Another aspect that may be contributed to disengagement is the fact that some participants were of the opinion that despite the variety of events that their voices are not heard about opportunities to express their individual and cultural needs. This issue will receive attention later in this chapter.

In the data were encouraging examples of members of the school community that reached out to marginalized members of the school community in an empathetic, caring and supportive manner. Boundaries were crossed between individual, groups and systems. This ranged from reaching out to a fellow distressed member in the school to individuals and groups in the community that were in need of care and support. The levels of support rendered that contribute to the promotion of relational wellbeing can be categorised on three levels namely: personal-educational and inspirational inputs; interpersonal-instrumental in the form of time, skills and services' community level- holistic interactions with the community.

This school also provided some opportunities for its members to have their concerns and needs addressed by experts and role models from the community and broader society. It was inspiring to see the powerful and inspirational impact the sharing of stories by role models and their encouragement had on the members of this school.

The findings suggest that leadership in this school will be able to ground their leadership in relatedness According to Bowman (2014), exemplary leaders develop respectful relationships built on interpersonal trust and empathy to improve others' lives. In their

leadership they reveal a social consensus in a commitment to humanity. They inspire through reaching out to others, sharing their vision with them and enlisting others in a common cause (Seidman as cited in Bowman, 2014). The greatest challenge for these developing leaders is not to understand their practice of leadership, but to practice leadership in the everyday interaction in school life. These views are well supported by transformational leadership theory and research. It is argued by Bass (1985) that instead of emphasising the linear and reductionist processes of the earlier theories of leadership, transformational leadership theory focus on emotions and values, and on leaders' experience of events that followers may find as meaningful.

As indicated in the literature there are restraining interactive dynamics present in schools that can hamper the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing. There were participants in the study that pointed out very definite restraining features in the efforts to enhance and promote relational wellbeing at their school. These features can be summarised in the following three restraining factors in the promotion of relational wellbeing:

1. Disengagement of some members from participation
2. Lack of support and encouragement to sustain initiatives
3. Individual needs and cultural factors are not included in activities.

The above mentioned restraining factors refer to ways of relating and interacting with others that evoke a sense of being uninvolved and not interested in being together in the school. However, as stated in the study, the equilibrium within an organisation, like a school, will often be maintained by forces within that organisation. These above restraining problems should certainly be addressed by these members, when channels and opportunities are made available to make voices heard. In this regard Brown (2011) argues that opportunities and resources should be made available to allow and encourage communication

on these types of problems. By letting go of control, solutions and emergence of ideas can be possible, instead of stagnated and frustrated members.

The promotion of relational wellbeing in schools has received ample attention in research studies. McLaughlin and Clarke (2010) for example argue that promotional strategies and research should be more relationally focused and take the complex nature of a school in consideration, instead of approaching the enhancement of wellbeing from an individualistic point of view. Molemane (2000) argues from research, that a web of caring relationships contributes to a school climate which fosters school effectiveness. Weeks (2008) argues that respectful, accepting and supportive relationship can contribute to a caring school environment; a much-needed development in South African school communities

The importance of relational wellbeing is also recognised by international policies and strategies for the promotion of relational wellbeing is in place, some with focus on relationships in schools communities. The World Health Organisation's Global School Health Initiative for example, encourages schools to have a more holistic approach in promoting health. In South Africa the international Health Promoting Schools framework, is guiding health promotion in school communities. Furthermore, the Department of Education is emphasizing psychosocial care and support in education (Department of Education, 2001). One can therefore not argue that the importance of relationships is not receiving any attention. The problem is however, that these policies and actions do not as such purposefully focus on the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing in the South African school communities.

One can never ignore the fact that as stated by Prilleltensky (2005) and Baumeister and Leary (1995) that schools must be considered as an ideal site in which young people can be developed through relationships, to improve their interpersonal skills, respect and sensitivity

to others. It is further reasoned by Prilleltensky that through this positive type of interaction, relational will not only be enhanced, but it should also reduce the risk of inter-personal conflict on anti-social behaviour in the school community. Through this formation within a web of dynamic interactional relationships these young people will hopefully one day become well-adjusted and productive members of society. Once again, one has to refer back to Vygotsky's adage: "It is through others that we develop into ourselves (p.161) (Yörk, 2009).

Based on the school leaders' perceptions of the current stance of relational wellbeing in the school community, the researcher concludes that relational wellbeing is already promoted in school communities in a spontaneous way. This can be ascribed to the fact that people are relational beings who have a natural and spontaneous sense of community and not individual atoms that need to exist independent of one another (Gergen, 2009). The concern is that activities and interaction that promote relational well-being are not necessarily acknowledged as such and are merely perceived as events that create opportunities to develop particular skills through participation. The concern is that we miss the opportunity to use these events and interactions to actively promote by ensuring that these events involve as many children as possible, by dealing with the challenges that might lead to the exclusion of some members.

5.3.2. Conclusion with reference to envisioned promotion of relational well-being.

The participants in this study was energised by the shift towards an appreciative approach in exploring the way in which the school functions, indicating that the leaders in this school actually yearn for a harmonious school environment in which they feel cared for and secure. Through their engagement in the discussion, they envision themselves as becoming creative and productive individuals that can contribute to society.

What is important is that participants seem believe naively that a school functioning at optimal levels of relational wellbeing can have a significant impact on individual, relational and the collective, of all the people connected to the school.

Despite the participants' realisation of the benefits a school where members feel respected, accepted and experience a sense of belonging, they failed to understand that the opportunity to make a difference was staring them in the face. They only need to take the initiative to realise their ideal of a sense of community. This perceived passivity is of great concern and the question must be asked why members only comply with and accept the present status of a lack of relational wellbeing at their school.

The researcher conclusively argues that due to the traditional leadership paradigm that expected, compliant and submissive followers who, will not disturb the equilibrium of a school is still prevailing in the school community. However the younger leaders seem to have a more transformative perspective on leadership and a clearer sense of the complexity of human interaction. They therefore seem more inclined to see schools as spaces where there are care and support, harmony and creativity - in other words enabling, inspiring spaces that emphasis relational well-being as pivotal to the promotion of the well-being of individuals and the school community as a whole.

According to Bowman (2014) leading deliberately involves confronting an organisation at its roots. However, at this stage it seems as if young leaders although inspired and excited by the possibilities of a school in which relational well-being is optimised, seem hesitant to challenge the more traditional approach that places the individual and not the relational at the core of achievement and success.

5.3.3. Conclusions with reference to the facilitation of the sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing in the school community.

The participants emphasised the importance of creating enduring activities and events for members of the school to connect and become involved in dynamic interaction with one another. As mentioned in chapter 1 and 2 literature strongly supports the importance of the ongoing creation of opportunities favourable to contact and interaction.

Some of the participants were however of the view that the majority of these activities and events were not paying attention to some individual needs of members, for example their needs to express their own creative talents. This was experienced as a source of frustration and anger towards the school system that did not hear their “voices” and what added to this unhappiness was the observation that some participants experienced a feeling that Western ideas and values are reflected in these activities, while other ethnic and racial groups’ cultural heritage is ignored.

The overwhelming majority of participants were frustrated by some members of the school’s unwillingness to become engaged in activities through participation and identified it as a major obstacle in the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing at their school. The fact that some participants went so far as to suggest that participation in at least one activity must be made compulsory, this indicates that although they appreciate the value of engagement, they do not realise how forcing people could restrain relational well-being in the school community. Despite sensing that nurturing relationships is important they seem to revert to the current practices of control. This is obviously the wrong way to go about dealing with this type of restraining behaviour because it certainly implicates some authoritative rigid control through rules and regulations.

Leaders must realise that if they believe in democratic and self-organising principles as suggested by complexity thinking, that more rules will uncertainly undercut their own valued-based development of their own valued-based leadership capabilities (Bowman, 2014).

What was interesting, significant and very encouraging was the fact that participants realised that in order to promote relational wellbeing and in order to sustain it, leaders should enhance communication between the members of the school community if they intend to resolve problems and formulate an action plan to optimise relational well-being in the school community. This is in line Morrison's argument (2002) that effective leadership is inseparable from effective communication. Communication is not just a matter of data exchange, but also a relational matter. The free flow of information through communication and dialogue not only promotes relationships, understanding, a sense of belonging, but also suggests democracy and sharing. Through conversation all voices are heard and that is certainly an indication of non-linear communication which is indicative of a democratic system (Morrison, 2002; Kitching, 2010).

The most encouraging response in this regard was the seemingly unconventional action by only one participant to suggest that such an important matter, like the promotion of relational wellbeing at this school should directly be discussed in a non-linear way of communication with the principal. These barriers and boundaries between members of a school community need to be removed to create a democratic school environment in which power is shared and mutual respect for one another is restored. What was discouraging through was the fact that only one participant made this suggestion and in a very hesitant and careful manner. The participant was not supported by fellow participants in this regard.

It was evident that such challenging behaviour towards authority figures might still be considered an usual channels of communication in a school community. Evidently a possible obstacles to the sustainable enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing in this school is inaccessible or limited democratic participation in decision making processes at this school.

Despite this possible restraining aspect which might entail participants own psychological acceptance of boundaries combined with a relatively rigid controlling authoritative system at this particular school, participants seem to realise that they can play a role in the promotion of relational well-being in their school. Although participant's were not very comfortable and confident to address this important topic of relational wellbeing with the authorities at their school they at least acknowledged that the way forward will require them to organise themselves in action groups that can take this process forward through active communication and formulation of action plans.

A further encouraging perspective from these leader participants' view of how the promotion of relational wellbeing can become a sustainable effort is the realisation that the community must be an integral part of their efforts. Several comments in this regard were made by participants emphasising the fact that only by collective effort and through collaboration with community members, relational wellbeing can be promoted for all. Participants even included the fact that to make their efforts to sustainable promotion of relational wellbeing successful more support and engagement from meso-level structures are needed.

Specific restraints identified by participants were the limited awareness of and appreciation of the concept of "promotion of relational wellbeing" at their school. Several suggestions towards pro-activity to facilitate awareness. The suggestion made by one of the

participants in this regard was encouraging as it reflected the realisation that the promotion of relational wellbeing is not a short term exercise. He made the following remark “We should have a motto in which we can work together”. This motto can remind learners continuously to keep on promoting relational wellbeing. Again participants emphasised the importance of awareness through communication. They clearly state that such an initiative should inform members of the school community about the intent to promote relational wellbeing on a constant basis in their school community. It’s well documented in research that programmes fails because of individualised and fragmented efforts to promote relational wellbeing.

As stated before, the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing is not an end in itself, but a process (Atkinson, 2013). This view is strongly supported by Bowman (2014) that the leadership lesson for future leaders is that disciplined leadership is anchored in identifying and realising the purpose of one’s goals. According to this author, a firm commitment to an organisation’s purpose has a profound impact on members’ behaviours. Leaders must have a commitment to bridge the gap between word and deed. They must constantly attend and ask questions about the progress in the promotion of relational wellbeing at their school.

5.3.4. Final conclusions

Participants in the study acknowledged the fact that events and activities connect the members of their school community and create opportunities to form relationships beneficial to promoting relational wellbeing at their school. There seems to be a realisation that willingness to cross boundaries, especially ethnic boundaries, will go a long way on the quest for relational wellbeing. Furthermore, a democratic environment will enable all participants to feel free to voice their opinions, knowing that they would not be victimised in doing so.

There were absolutely no doubt that all these participants wish for a more secure and harmonious school community in which they can attempt to overcome their previous disadvantages and be able to develop their creative talent that might enable them, one day live a meaningful life and become productive citizens of society.

Further it can be concluded that most of the participants also realizes that in order to establish a school community that can provided them with secure and harmonious space to inspire and motivate them to achieve their dreams, relational wellbeing must be achieved and promoted. In this regard they suggested that a more pro-active approach to the promotion of relational wellbeing should be followed. In order to achieve this objective, it is suggested that the awareness of the importance of relational wellbeing should be brought under the attention of all members of the school community and that the barriers between school leaders (management) and members of the school need to be addressed and crossed. Unless a trusting interrelationship that enables lateral and collaborative cooperation between all members of a school community, the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing seems to be unlikely.

The researcher is of the opinion that the general understanding of the complexity of human behaviour and the importance of relationships in the context of this school community is limited and therefore a restricting obstacle. This aspect should certainly receive specific attention in the future.

Connections between members of the school are a driving force in shaping engagement with the school. Participation in activities and events creates opportunities for such connection and engagement. It is through this type of engagement that sense of belonging is developed that positively influence relational wellbeing, academic outcomes and promote social development. According to McLaughlin & Clarke (2010), all these aspects are

interrelated and disentangling them is like untying a spider's web. These authors refers to complexity thinking's focus on "that which are interwoven" (Stacey, 2007; Jörg, 2009) which emphasises the importance of development through interaction and reciprocal relationships with one another.

Based on the above discussion it is evident that the interaction between individuals and systems are rather complex. The importance of relationships in schools can also not be ignored. The perceptions of school leaders concerning the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing, thus entails the building of communities in which members can have sustaining and meaningful relationships.

As stated in Chapter I, mental health and wellbeing programmes will certainly fail if the approach followed is individualistic in nature. In this regard, several studies supported this statement and conclusion (Atkinson, 2013; Prilletsensky, 1997; 2005; 2007; Roffey, 2008). In this study it is reasoned that even the whole school approach with its holistic features are doubtful to succeed in the promotion of relational wellbeing in South African schools due to the fact that the complex dynamics of human nature and relationships are not fully realised. There also does not seem to be a full appreciation of the dynamic and complex interaction between the different systems that directly influence the relational wellbeing of members. The impact of leadership and the role it should play in a complex organisation like a school seems not to have not kept pace with the ever changing modern society and its dependency on flexibility and adaptability for survival. From a complexity perspective this particular school still deals with emotional, behavioural and social problems, through a simplistic view of cause and effect and applies individualistic controlled interventions.

5.4. Recommendations

5.4.1 Recommendations for research

Like international research, South African research do to some extent acknowledge the importance of relationships in creating an environment that is conducive of effective learning and teaching, it is not necessarily perceived as a critically ingredient of wellbeing (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010; White, 2010; McMillian et al., 2013).

Despite the measures taken by DoE in this regard, the general relational wellbeing of a school community still does not seem to be enhanced or promoted. In this regard there seems to be a need for further research that specifically focuses on relationships in school communities.

Based on the argument and findings of this study, the research further argues that the complexity of school systems and its dynamic potential to become self-organised through relationships needs more attention from research efforts. Another area that has been neglected in research is what interventions can be introduced to change leadership styles from its traditional autocratic rigid nonlinear style to a role of leadership that is more transformative in nature and able to incooperate the complex dynamics relational aspects situated within a school community.

5.4.2 Recommendations for practice

Leadership research has primarily emerged out of psychology and social psychology, and therefore has focussed heavily on individual traits, personality and small group contexts. The result was that we have little insight in how groups of interactive, interdependent agents can generate adaptive changes that appear as if spontaneously generated (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). Leaders (individuals throughout the system) in bureaucratic organizational forms (educational system, including schools) need to understand the entangled nature of

adaptive and administrative processes and manage this entanglement (Uhl-Bien & Marion, 2009). School leaders in the 21st century must be made aware of and understand their role in the dynamic interactional processes in order to navigate the complexity of a constant changing school environment (Fullan, 2009). From the perspective of complexity thinking, as argued in this study, all parties involved in the design of policies and programs to enhance and promote relational wellbeing should be informed about this approach.

From the lack of interest in participation in this study by the more senior leaders in staff, it can be assumed that the rigid culture of authoritative control is unlikely to be changed through awareness types of programs amongst management, present leaders and officials in the Department of Education.

In this regard it seems to be appropriate to again refer to the concept of transformational leadership. Burns (as cited in Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005) views the purpose of leadership as the motivation of followers to work together in a more emotional way to work together in a more emotional way towards more transcendental goals. The argument that leadership is no longer just for formal leaders is supported by Bowman (2014) who suggests that their school be cascade across schools to create new leaders. According to Bowman (2014), leadership is learnable and it becomes with leading oneself. According to this author, leadership is all about inspiration and it is everyone's responsibility. By giving control to members of a school, leaders can be created (Bowman, 2014). The removal of the barriers to power all members of the school community can be enabled to become leaders in the promotion of relational wellbeing.

There can be no doubt that the general tendency in South African schools, including this particular school under study, still attempt to maintain equilibrium at all cost through regulating control. Kitching (2010) suggests in this regard that the complexity principles that

challenge the present controlling and individualized approach towards the enhancement of relational wellbeing in schools should be introduced. Also a more relationship-focused approach should be recommended and promoted to all people involved in policy development and implementation (Kitching, 2010).

The reasoning that in order to enhance and promote relational wellbeing at schools, they must be empowered to become leaders that are allowed to make a difference at their schools – they have to get the opportunity to practice their understanding of leadership (Bowman, 2014). This enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing seems to be ultimately dependent on future leaders that prove themselves in their ability to lead a school through relationships instead of rules and regulations. Leaders that have confidence in the fact that a school can become a self-organizing systems.

Bowman (2014) reasons that leadership development in schools involves a process that occurs over time. The greatest challenge for these developing leaders is not understanding the practice of leadership, but it is the practicing of leadership in the everyday interaction in school life that entails – “one conversation, one selfless act, one instructional activity and one community service project at a time” (p.63). Leadership can be thus learned if leaders are prepared to start from the grass-root and core principles of human beings need for continued relatedness in their lives.

On the basis of these findings of the study and the above discussion, the following recommendations are made:

Firstly and in occurrence with the transformational leadership theory that leaders must put more emphasis on emotions, values and relationships and Bowman’s (2014) arguments that leadership is learnable, it can be recommended that potential leaders in a school

community should be trained in the concept of transformational leadership. As argued by Bowman (2014), leadership is more about inspiration and everyone's responsibilities.

Secondly, some project's, similar to the Gatehouse Project in Australia (Bond et al., as cited in Roffey, 2009) can be launched in South African schools in which training in transformational leadership is part of the curriculum. Should such a pilot study prove to be successful, it would certainly convince policy makers to rethink current approaches towards education.

The role of leadership in the complex dynamic relational aspects of a school community is certain that should receive more research. The humanization potential; as argued by Jörg (2009) of thinking in terms of a non-linear complex reality in which education can be conducted is another area that are not only important for its educational implication, but also for relational enhancement, remain greatly under-researched.

5.5. Limitation and strengths of study

At the onset of the research there was some resistance from members in senior positions. This may be ascribed to them being unfamiliar with qualitative research and the strict adherence to ethical consideration demanded in academic research. However after their concerns had been addressed these members were more comfortable with the process.

All young school leaders (learners) who were invited to become involved in the study, agreed to participate and gave their full cooperation during the two phases of the study. This positive and enthusiasm from these young leaders to involve themselves in a study that concerns relational wellbeing at their school may be indicative that relational wellbeing is at their school some concern. Another encouraging sign was that due to their enthusiasm, these

young leaders would be willing to participate in further research projects that focus on the enhancement and promotion of relational wellbeing at their school.

As indicated all the staff were invited to participate in the research as they are all considered as leaders within their classroom contexts. Yet only 25 % of teachers participated in the study. What was interesting is that it was almost without exception, it was younger teachers, not been employed at this school for an extended period, that were willing to participate in the study. The lack of interest of more senior members of staff, were interesting but also unfortunate. Due to their absence from the research process the more “traditional” perceptions on the promotion of relational wellbeing at their school were not included. In this regard their absence restricted the formulation and conceptualisation of a holistic perception of relational wellbeing, as well as the generalisation of findings. One can only speculate about possible reasons and dynamics for their disengagement. Some voices could have been silenced due to the fact that this type of participation across these boundaries of interrelatedness is perhaps unusual to the more traditional orientated leadership style. What is concerning about their behaviour is that it certainly not an encouraging sign that these influential leaders of this school do not fully appreciate the importance of promotion of relational wellbeing at their school. However, the mere presence of some more senior leadership figures, teachers and some heads of department during the working session, might also limited the candour of some participants to speak out about their perceptions of the more restraining aspects of the efforts to promote relational wellbeing at their school.

The obvious contradicting and paradoxical differences in motivational attitudes between these two groups of leaders, possibly illustrates the core obstacles and challenges that schools have to confront in addressing the promotion of relational wellbeing. For relational wellbeing to be enhanced and promoted leaders in the school system must be open and willing to allow change and the self- organisation capacities of their own school system.

According to Stacey (2007) there are no hypothetical or even spatial distance between the controlled and the network of dynamic interactional processes. Leaders should have the capacity to know that they don't know, and to be open to change (Morrison, 2014).

The way in which the appreciative inquiry was conducted in this study might have contributed to the fact that the data obtained was more explorational in nature. Due to time restrictions, a more in depth analysis of these relational dynamics were not possible and therefore these findings can only be considered to be explorative in nature. Despite this limitation it seemed as if the application of an appreciative inquiry method worked well in identifying emerging ideas and perspectives on the promotion of relational well-being. Combined with the work session in which the responses was discussed it was apparent that the free nature of the appreciative inquiry allowed for the emergence of innovative ideas that could transform the school community through the promotion of relational well-being.

The strength of this study must be seen in the fact that it focus on the potential of complexity thinking to provide a new perspective on the important role that leadership is based on relatedness and its potential transformational in nature can play in the development of a complex nonlinear reality that is more humanistic and conducive for the promotion of relational wellbeing (Jörg, 2009; Morrison, 2002; Leithwood & Jantzi; 2005). Just by conducting this study at this particular school, already created an awareness of acknowledging relational wellbeing as an essential part of schooling.

5.6. Final word

This study attempted to make a modest contribution towards a better understanding of the complex and dynamic processes in school communities, that should be considered before any interventions are undertaken to promote relational wellbeing.

The researcher wish to conclude this study with the following words of Rogers (1982), in his article “New World – New Person” that these “new people” will experience life in terms of constantly changing process, they will life in a comfortable relationship with nature; will share power with others; will co-operate in the interests of the larger community; will strive towards wholeness; will not be materialist; will find meaning outside the self; will be open to experience; and will respect the integrity of all other people.

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Addendum A



Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies
Corner of East and College Street
Wellington
7655
Tel: 021 8643593
Fax: 021 8642654

	RESEARCH PROJECT 2013
RESEARCH PROJECT	NWU – Centre of Child, Youth and Family studies
RESEARCHER	J. de Kok
STUDY LEADER	Dr. A.E Kitching
TITLE OF STUDY	School leaders' perceptions of promoting relational wellbeing in a secondary school community.
TITLE OF PROJECT	“Developing sustainable support to enhance quality of life and well-being for children, youth and families in South Africa: A trans-disciplinary approach”
ETHICAL NUMBER	NWU-00060-12-A1

Research questionnaire

Section 1: Discover – What is currently happening or happened in the past

1.1. What has been or currently is your most rewarding experience of promoting relational wellbeing at your school?

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1.1.1. Please describe what happened and who was involved.

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1.1.2. Why was it so significant and meaningful?

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1.2. What was the most significant initiative undertaken by leaders at your school in promoting relational wellbeing?

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1.2.1. Who was involved and what happened?

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1.2.2. Why do you think this effort was successful?

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1.2.3. Why was it satisfying and what did you learn from it?

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Section 2: Dream - How do we envision it ?

2.1. What difference do you think the promotion of relational wellbeing can make in the school community?

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2.2. How do you imagine this school community, when relational wellbeing is functioning at optimal levels? You can use symbols, metaphors, etc to describe your vision of the school.

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Section 3: Design – What actions do we need?

3.1. What needs to happen to enhance relational wellbeing in your school community?

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3.2. What is needed from policy and programmes on local and national level to ensure relational well-being at your school?

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3.3. What will inspire you as a leader to continue with your efforts in promoting relational wellbeing?

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Section 4 : Destiny – Where do we want to go?

4.1. Please write down a few possible ideas on how to further promote relational wellbeing at your school community.

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4.2. What support and resources in your opinion is needed to promote relational wellbeing at your school and in the school community?

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Addendum B



Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies

Corner of East and College Street
Wellington

7655

Tel: 021 8643593

Fax: 021 8642654

04 November 2013

Dear Participant and Parent / Guardian

Permission to participate in a research project of the North-West University

My name is Judy de Kok. I am currently conducting research for a Master's degree in Psychology at the North-West University. The title of the study is:

School leaders' perceptions of promoting relational wellbeing in a secondary school community.

The aim of the research is to understand how people who are in leadership positions in the school think about the *promotion of relational well-being*. The promotion of relational wellbeing refers to the ways to facilitate relationships on all the levels in the school that will support everyone to be well as a person and feel part of the school community.

Your participation will include the following: You will be asked to complete a questionnaire and following the completion of the questionnaire. You will take part in group discussions about your perceptions of relational well-being in your school. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts about your participation in this project. Participation in the project is voluntary and you will not be disadvantaged in any way if you decide not to participate. You can also withdraw from the study at any stage if you do not feel comfortable with the process. If you feel you need to talk to someone as a result of your participation in the project, support will be made available for this purpose.

Your parents/legal guardians are hereby informed about the project and they must agree that you may participate in the project. You can discuss this invitation to participate with them and then decide if you want to participate in the project. If you give your assent, you will still be allowed to withdraw from the project at any time you want without any consequences. You will not receive any compensation for your participation in the project. If you are comfortable that you understand the information and agree to participate in the research, you and your parents / guardian must please sign the following consent form.

CONSENT FORM

I _____ ID _____

I acknowledge that the above information has been read and discussed with me (voluntary participant) and I acknowledge that I understand and agree with the conditions of participation in this research project. I am therefore willing to participate voluntarily in this project.

Name and surname (Participant / Child) Signature Date

Name and Surname (Parent / Guardian) Signature Date

Name and surname (Researcher) Signature Date

Addendum C



Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies
Corner of East and College Street
Wellington
7655
Tel: 021 8643593
Fax: 021 8642654

23 October 2013
Dear Participant

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT **A research project of the North-West University**

Title: School leaders' perceptions of promoting relational wellbeing in a secondary school community

You are hereby invited to engage in a research project to exchange information about how school leaders perceive relational well-being in their school. Ethical approval for this research project, has been obtained which is conducted by the Centre for Child, Youth and Family Studies (CCYF), Faculty of Health Sciences at the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus.

The purpose of the research is to understand how people who are in leadership positions in the school think about *the promotion of relational well-being*. The promotion of relational wellbeing refers to the ways to facilitate relationships on all the levels in the school that will support everyone to be well as a person and feel part of the school community.

In signing this form I declare that:

I have been informed about the purpose of the research and understand that I shall be participating in a two-day data-gathering session where I shall be requested to complete a questionnaire on how I perceive relational well-being in my school. I shall also engage in in-depth focus group discussions.

I understand that there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts when I agree voluntarily to participate in the study.

I understand that although the results of the study may be published, my identifying information will not be revealed. The North-West University will maintain confidentiality of all records, material and recordings. I have been informed that I shall not be compensated for my participation. I have been informed that any questions I may have concerning this research or my participation before or after my consent, will be answered by the researcher of this study. I understand that I may withdraw my consent and discontinue participating at any time during the research process, without penalty or loss of benefit to myself. In signing this consent form, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights and remedies.

Name and surname

Signature

Dat

6 Acacia Street,
SE 3
Vanderbijlpark
1911
3 May 2015

To whom it may concern

Re: Editing and proofreading of Masters dissertation

Name: Judith de Kok

Student number: 20543719

Title of dissertation: *School leaders' perceptions of relational wellbeing in a secondary school in Gauteng*

I, Althéa Kotze, hereby acknowledge editing and proofreading the above-mentioned dissertation to the satisfaction of the client, Judith de Kok.

Note: Due to a time constraint:

- the preliminary material (title pages, abstract, and table of contents) could not be edited
- the editing was done chapter by chapter
- no editing of the text could be done as a whole to my satisfaction, and
- the bibliography did not form part of the editing agreement.

I would therefore prefer to proofread the dissertation as a whole once the examination process is over with, and before it is printed and bound.

Yours sincerely

Dr Althéa (AD) Kotze



Althéa Kotze • Accredited Language practitioner • APEd (South African Translators' Institute, no 1001073)

• PhD Afrikaans and Dutch • MA Afrikaans and Dutch • MA Applied Linguistics • BA Hons • BA • PGCE •

6 Acacia Street • SE3 • Vanderbijlpark • 1911 • South Africa

+27 (0) 823518509 (m)

+27 (0) 16 9324932 (w)

althea.erasmus@gmail.com